EMERGING VOICES:

NARRATIVES OF LIFE

EXPERIENCE WRITING TEACHERS UNDER

CONTROLLED EDUCATION IN JAPAN

BY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My School Experience- the 1980s

School was not a pleasant place for me. It was filled with tension and I felt like the heavy air was smothering and crushing me. At least it was not a place where I could be "myself." The total control of the students was defined by means of numerous rules to restrict students' behavior, with a menacing attitude from the teachers. The use of physical force by teachers was an everyday occurrence, to create a threatening atmosphere in school, to intimidate the students, and to force submission.

Many teachers walked around the school building carrying wooden swords. This force was directed toward any student who demonstrated deviant behaviors, which included not only students who confronted the authority, but also unpunctual students, or dull students who failed to follow instructions promptly and accurately. A tremendous numbers of trivial regulations which had to be followed both in school and outside of school established meaningless "deviant behavior" of the students, and therefore, provided numerous opportunities for teachers to punish students. Everyday, at 8:30 A.M., clothing inspections were conducted. All the students were made to line up in the hallway

and stand straight on the wooden floor with toes touching exactly the third wooden board from the wall. I do not know why such a rule was important but it was important, obviously, for the teachers. What was important was not the rule itself, but the fact that we were expected to obey the rule. Teachers carrying wooden swords walked slowly by gazing at nervous students' eyes, and nudging students toes which stuck out from the line with their swords.

As I stood in such a threatening environment, I adapted to it. Scenes of a male classmate being slapped by a math teacher until he provided a correct answer, or a girl whose hair has been cut off by a teacher in front of the class, frightened me at the beginning of the school year. But such incidents gradually became part of the normal school scene to which I paid no particular attention.

I learned not to stand out too much while I was in school. I was afraid to be seen by teachers, because being seen normally meant receiving some punishment or slander for demonstrating deviant behavior. I chose not to be seen, because I was safe as long as I was just part of the crowd. I felt that there was no need to present myself as I am, or to let people hear what I thought in those days. There was no need nor expectation for me to be myself. I was just an object of control, as were the other 300 students.

Teachers were happy as long as the space called "school" existed and they had someone who filled the space and over whom their routines ruled. To be precise, who the students were and what students felt were of no interest to

the teachers. As a matter of fact, it was easier for the teachers to conduct their daily routines if all the students acted in the same manner. The purpose of education was to kill individuality in the students. The teachers were like factory workers on the assembly line. They poured prescribed knowledge into the mass of students who were sent in front of them by a "conveyer belt." Then the teachers sorted out the students to go to the next section in the assembly line based on their mastery of the knowledge.

To efficiently transmit the knowledge and categorize these students into various ability groups within a short period of time, teachers developed systematic methods and rules in handling students. Teachers first attempted to rehabilitate students who could not adapt to the "teachers' way." After the failure of such an attempt, these students were simply thrown out of the system. I was one who was able to adapt to their way, and I was called a "good student." The reason I was capable of adapting to the school system was that I had great fear of failure. I had very strong compulsion to be successful in school and in life from a very early age.

Throughout my junior high school and high school years, I suffered from tremendous pressure caused by tests. I believe preparing for the examination itself was not a problem, but rather the fear and uncertainty I held toward my future prospects. Not being able to enter "the right school" meant having to tolerate the shame of taking a course in life which is one or more steps below

someone who successfully entered the right school. Such anxieties besieged my mind and I found it impossible to completely escape from fear about tests until I finally was accepted into college.

I considered my concerns during my school years as normal. In Japanese society, the emphasis on rank orders is traditional. Rankings among schools and corporations are clearly determined in Japanese society (Ogura, 1987). A diploma from one of the high ranking universities is a necessary condition for being employed by a large corporation. Similarly, entering a prestigious university requires attending a prestigious high school.

For most Japanese, tracking starts when one enters high school. The results of entrance examinations administered by high schools determine the student's future, at least in terms of limiting one's opportunity. The examinations are administered only once a year, and the anxiety students experience prior to taking entrance examinations is tremendous. The Japanese public generally supports the idea that a student of "substantial ability" will pass the examination on one's first attempt. This widespread idea only causes even stronger apprehensions among students about the exams.

I believed that passing the entrance examination was crucial to my future success, and it had grown to be my greatest worry during my school days. As a matter of fact, I could not escape from the topic of the entrance examination, because it occupied a major part of daily conversation everywhere I went; at

school, at home, and in the community. Listening to stories of the recognition and respect given to students who managed to enter prestigious schools made me envy them, causing me to experience a sense of uncertainty about my self-worth. I wondered if I would still be a worthwhile person if I were to fail the examinations, and I studied without questioning.

Questions such as why I had to study for the exam, whether studying for the exam would benefit me, or why the examination system existed, never occurred to me. Thinking about such questions seemed meaningless to me since it only took time away from learning what I needed to survive in the competition. I now see the hierarchy of knowledge created and imposed on me by the educational system. The textbook and tests legitimize the knowledge. I could not help but acquire such knowledge because that was the only way I could be recognized and to be respected.

Time passed quickly. My life was filled with exams; besides the entrance examination, I had to take some preliminary exams which determined which school I would be eligible to attend. Every time I took an exam my scores were reported in comparison with those of other students. I did not necessarily enjoy nor agree with the system, in which we were constantly evaluated only by the results of tests. As a matter of fact, I could hardly wait to graduate; I wanted to escape from the suffering and go somewhere else.

I was not willing to join some of my classmates demonstrating anger and confronting the system nor was I willing to join those who left the system. I was not as brave as they were, and what is more, I thought I knew the way to escape from suffering. The way was to be selected as one of the fortunate students who could climb to the top of the existing hierarchy in society, where more freedom and power were accessible. I forced myself to run the rail set before me, believing that I had to run as fast as I could, faster than anyone else to reach the goal where limited numbers of students were welcomed. It seemed that winning in the severe academic competition was the only way I would be released from the pain of being in a totally controlled situation. This belief led to my determination to adapt myself to the existing system, just until I reached my goal.

However, the result I had to face at the end of this game was an unexpected one. By believing that being an oppressor is the only way to escape from an oppressive situation, I internalized the oppressor and oppressed myself as Freire (1970) states. After obediently participating in numerous activities and establishing the expected attitudes opposing my desire and interest, my sense of self disappeared. In addition, knowledge which I had internalized through my education without critical reflections caused apprehensions which suppressed my body and mind. I was unable to identify any relationships between myself and the knowledge I internalized, nor could I prove the legitimacy of those knowledge to myself.

The knowledge I obtained by sacrificing all the other things I could have experienced as a teenager, had no significance to me as soon as the competition was over. I realized what I had been doing during my school years was merely to accept the hierarchy of the knowledge created by those in authority, who took me over and confused me. I should not have been surprised by the consequences of my education, since it was probably the result of a conscious plan laid out by educators.

My attempt to deny who I became after going through the school system was impossible, because I had nothing but a false identity. Pinar (1975) states that a person who has been taken over by the image of a self imposed by others, seeks validation from others constantly and that he/she cannot help but hold an attitude of self-hate. Frustration, anger and hatred occupied my mind, but they were unclear to me. My years of schooling told me that feeling anger was nonsense. I did not know exactly with whom I was angry or whom I hated. Therefore, my feelings remained unexpressed and unheard.

Education should be a journey for finding oneself, and strengthening relationships with others. However, the education I experienced in Japan was of a totally different kind. The more education I received, and the more objectified knowledge I took in, the more distant I became from myself, from others and from the world.

Problems of Japanese Education - the 1990s

The success of Japanese education has often been praised by Western educators. Strict discipline in Japanese schools and high achievement on academic standardized tests have even led some educators in the West to express their desire to adopt the Japanese model (Schoolland, 1986). Japanese education has succeeded in certain aspects. For example, education in Japan has functioned exactly as the leaders of industry would have it, successfully producing citizens who contribute to increasing the productivity of the nation. Elites competently invent technologies and apply them to production, while non-elites industriously and submissively work under the supervision of the elites. Their contribution was so great that Japan's economy grew in real terms at the high average annual rate of 10% during the 1960s to become the world's greatest economic super power by the 1980s (Ogawa, 1982). However, whether Japanese education has been outstanding in terms of achieving the genuine goal of education which to nurture humanity and to develop the full potential of individuals' needs is in question.

Bullying

Bullying among students, one of the most serious problems in Japanese schools have today represents negative aspect of Japanese education. The incidence of bullying has increased significantly in the past several years, and

research shows that 56,000 incidents of bullying were reported by Japanese public elementary and junior high schools in 1995, 2.6 times more occurrences than had been reported during the previous year (Hani, 1996).

Not only has the number of bullying cases increased, but the cruelty of the bullying has become more serious in recent years as indicated by the increasing number of students committing suicide to escape from brutal treatment by their peers at school. Suicides of young students have been reported continuously in the news since last November. The suicide of one male junior high school student in Chiba prefecture in January 1996 disclosed the harsh bullying he had experienced in the school. He had regularly been violently attacked by a group of male students regularly who extorted approximately $ 3,000 from him over the past three years, beginning the day he moved to the junior high school (Hani, 1996). The increasing number of bullying incidents should not be attributed only to students who engage in violence against their peers but also to passive observers. According to interviews conducted by the Japan Times (Hani, 1996), 40% of students criticized the victims of bullies as being responsible for the act of bullying, by stating that victims were misfits. Moreover, teachers who are in the position to provide moral guidance to students' behavior are often hesitant to intervene against bullying. Some teachers have even sided with the bully (Schoolland, 1986).

School Phobia

Compassion and justice are no longer part of Japanese school settings, so that the development of humanity in a genuine sense is non-existent. As a result, students do not view school as a pleasant place to be. Research indicates that more than half of students attending secondary schools in Tokyo currently have considered dropping out of school (Ari, 1996). Great numbers of students have reached a point at which they refused to attend schools, making "school phobia" one of the major problems in current Japanese education.

Students who have school phobia are defined as those who are incapable of attending schools due to psychological and environmental factors, regardless of their desire to adapt to schools (Ari, 1996). The number of students who have school phobia has increased tremendously in past years (Young, 1993). Many students absent from school long term are diagnosed as mentally disordered, requiring psychiatric therapy and prescribed medications (Schoolland, 1986). However, considering the various inhumane incidents occurring in school settings, we are urged to question and examine whether it is the students with school phobia or the school itself which should be diagnosed as abnormal and in need of treatment.

Aum Shinrikyo Sarin Case

The Aum Shinrikyo Sarin case which took place in Tokyo on March 20th, 1995, has also brought our attention to the harmful effect of education in modern

Japan. The Aum Shinrikyo is a radical Buddhist religious cult led by Shoko Asahara. The group had plotted the overthrow of the Japanese government, and as their initial implementation of the plan, the members of Aum Shinrikyo scattered Sarin gas in subway stations in downtown Tokyo. The Sarin hit commuters on the rush hour train and caused 5000 injuries (*"Aum wo hajimeta"*, 1995). Further investigation by the police has also revealed that the cult had conducted various scientific experiments and developed chemical weapons for expected battles with the government (*"Aum wo hajimeta"*, 1995). Astonishing the public even more was discovering that many cult members participating in the large scale murder were "elites" who graduated from the most prestigious universities and obtained admirable positions in established research institutions (*"Oitsumerareta Aum"*, 1995). Why did these elites, supposedly the most respected and intelligent citizens in the nation, not sense the fraud in the principle of the religious organization?

The Aum Shinrikyo Sarin case has presented us with several weaknesses of Japanese education. The emphasis on memorizing tremendous amounts of information does not allow individuals to examine the meaning of the knowledge nor ways to utilize the knowledge. Another shortcoming is the tendency to seek absolute answers immediately from an authority and accept them without critical reflection. The elites who had never been defeated in the race of climbing up the ladder, excelled in perfectly following the command and expectations of those in

authority. However, they lacked the ability to use their own sense and intuition in making appropriate decisions for themselves. As a result, they used their knowledge incorrectly and harmed innocent citizens.

Students in Japan today are bewildered. The strong emphasis on competition and winning has devastated the souls of many children. In addition, the extreme "control" of the students has prohibited them from thinking critically or questioning the existing system. Therefore, students do not possess the ability to clearly describe the oppressions they experience, the oppressor, or the causes of the oppression which exists in the society. Being incapable of identifying problems causes extreme frustration which the students cannot dissipate. I believe such frustration and uncertainty existing among students manifest themselves in negative forms such as bullying, school phobia and the Aum Shinrikyo case.

Origin of Problems: Controlled Education

The controlled education which was established during the 1950s and the 1960s is the cause of various social and educational problems in Japan today (Young, 1993). The educational policies which enforce subordination of teachers to standardized education was implemented by the Ministry of Education with the consultation of the leaders of large industries during the late 1950s and the early 1960s (Yamazumi, 1993). Stronger textbook inspections

were conducted, greatly restricting teachers' freedom in selecting materials which could be brought into the classroom (Yamazumi, 1993). The Deprivation of Teachers' freedoms and rights in education was further promoted through the implementation of teacher evaluations and the legal enforcement of submission to instructional guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education. The implementation of a national academic achievement test in 1961 which measured students' mastery of knowledge included in standardized curriculum reinforced teachers' compliance to instructional guidelines (Yamazumi, 1993).

Standardization of education enabled Japan to achieve a drastic increase in national productivity within a short period of time. However, the same education also caused a crisis in democratic education, preventing students from critically examining knowledge and expressing their opinions freely (Yamanobe, 1966). Students' and teachers' voices, inquiries, dialogues, and reflections gradually disappeared from the curriculum as control over education increased.

Life Experience Writing Teachers

Life experience writing teachers believe in promoting rational thinking and the development of compassionate attitudes in education (Yamazumi, 1993; Ogawa, 1973; Tsurumi, 1970). In class, life experience writing teachers

encourage students to honestly write their feelings and thoughts which emerged through life experiences. They also guide their students to share their writings in class to have a dialogue with others to reflect on the written experiences and negotiate the meaning of them (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

The educational stance of life experience writing teachers contradicts with that of controlled education which began to dominate Japanese education in the 1950s. Controlled education, which categorizes students based on academic achievements, inhibits students' thinking, strengthens competition among students, and deprives students rights in learning what is relevant to their lives (Adachi 1963; Kokubun, 1955; Yamanobe, 1966). Life experience writing teachers courageously articulated dangers of controlled education and persisted in practicing the education they believe in.

Controlled education which started in the 1950s is still dominant in today's schools, causing numerous social problems such as bullying, school phobia and the Aum Shinrikyo case. Concerns of life experience writing teachers articulated throughout their educational practices from the beginning of controlled education in the 1950s must be the same kind of concerns expressed by the teachers of today. Studying how life experience teachers saw educational problems, how their practice conflicted with school systems, and how they dealt with the conflicts, could bring new insights to today's teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to record and examine the lived experience of teachers who practiced life experience writing education in Japan under controlled education extending from the 1950s to the present. There are two major objectives in this research. One is to examine the teachers' biographic information preceding their teaching careers. Through examination, the researcher will attempt to identify personal beliefs and values which influenced their development of educational beliefs. The second objective of the research is to examine the educational beliefs and values of these teachers through analyzing descriptions of their teaching practices. Routines, strategies and techniques the teachers used to enhance students' learning in their classroom, in addition to the manner in which the teachers interacted with their students, parents, administrators, and colleagues will be examined. In examining their teaching practices, special focus will be placed on how their beliefs lead them to view controlled education and how they manage to pursue life experience writing education under controlled settings.

Significance of the Study

Writing lived experiences of classroom teachers who are the

"inside experts" in education, contributes significantly to expanding our knowledge about the essences of teaching and transmitting them to the next generations (Jalongo, Isenberg and Gerbracht, 1995; Schubert, 1991, p.211). Narratives or stories have been used as an effective means of transmitting the essence of life and cultural knowledge in various cultures throughout history (Schubert, 1991). Similarly, in the area of education, narratives written by teachers can be a significant way to reveal the essence of good teaching. According to Schubert (1991), teachers have revealed the essence of best teaching through anecdotes rather than by directly explaining it.

Schubert (1991) also states that educational theories should be seen as praxis in which theory and practice are embodied together "by continuous process of critical reflection" (p. 214). Reflection, in Dewey's (1916) definition is "the reconstruction or reorganization of experiences which adds to the meaning of experiences and increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences, and it is reflection which "joins and mediates theory and practice" (p.76). Therefore, exploring teachers' reflections of educational experiences is indispensable for understanding educational phenomena as praxis. Schubert (1991) proclaims the importance of reflection in understanding the curriculum, stating that we must enter into reflective conversation with teachers. Only in this way, can we understand the complicated processes of teaching in which theory and practice interact with each other and develop together. Since teachers have

used the narrative mode frequently in reflecting upon their educational experiences, narratives should be useful in studying teachers' reflective practices.

Another contribution that the story of teachers can make is that they will encourage readers to critically examine and reflect on the writer's educational experiences as well as their own (Jalongo et al, 1995; Miller, 1992). Such reflection would guide these teachers in determining the directions they should take in educational settings.

Examining the lived experiences of life experience writing teachers in controlled education is particularly important, because the problems of education today have their roots in educational goals and policies implemented during the 1950s and 1960s as controlled education was established. The essence of good teaching revealed by life experience writing teachers, who have pursued democracy in education four forty years under controlled education, must encourage and guide teachers today to reflect on their actions and to find the solutions to the problems current educators face.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical Development of Life Experience Writing Movement

Reading research on the historical development of life experience writing education (Tsurumi, 1970; Sasai, 1981), three major periods were determined. The first period was started in the 1910s and continued to the middle of 1920s. The second period is from the middle of 1920s to the 1940, and the third period is from 1945 to the 1950s.

The First Period: the 1910s Through the Mid. 1920s

The person who represents the first period of life experience writing is Enosuke Ashida (Sasai, 1981). Ashida, greatly influenced by Zen Buddhism, held the belief that one should disregard the requirements and criteria which exists in one's external world and return to oneself (Sasai, 1981). Ashida proclaimed that the purpose of writing is self-actualization, and believed that students must carefully observe and write about meaningful life events to achieve self-actualization. Ashida's conception of writing on self-selected topics marked the emergence of life experience writing.

The realism movement which was main stream in Japanese literature in the early 20th century, also contributed to the development of life experience

writing (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). One conspicuous philosophy and characteristic of realism is to cease writing in the traditional written language (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). Since the Japanese language originally did not have a writing system, the Japanese borrowed and used the Chinese writing system. This Chinese-originated written language is very different from the Japanese spoken language which was used in daily life (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). Although the Japanese have adapted the Chinese writing system to represent Japanese language over the years, the written language, remained foreign and arduous for many Japanese. Without special training, one could not read or write.

To abandon such traditions and to make the written language a more familiar tool for commoners, eminent writers in realism such as Takahama Kyoshi and Masaoka Shiki proclaimed the use of the spoken language in writing (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). These writers believed in the use of informal language and the objective description of natural phenomena in writing, saying that it was the way to explore beauty in the universe (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

Ashida's belief in writing which emphasized the importance of encouraging children to write about interesting daily life phenomena by using everyday language was considered liberal in writing education in the 1910s and 1920s (Kokubun, 1955). In the typical writing classrooms of this era, the students

were presented with models of good writing to which they were to follow. The closer the students' writings were to the model, the better they were (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). The purpose of writing education was to learn the form and techniques. Therefore, no attention was paid to the content of students' writings. For example, such sentence as "Desks are made of wood and they are used for studying" were included in textbooks to practice writing in elementary schools (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958, p.30).

In writing courses where the students were presented with the model to follow accurately, students' writings were standardized. The writings were judged either to be good or bad. Such writing education killed student's creativity and freedom to write (Sasai, 1981). Ashida criticized the writing education practiced in schools, proclaiming that writing for the purpose of practicing writing was different from authentic writing, and such education would not enhance students' abilities to write (Nihon sakubun no Kai, 1958). Ashida asserted that writing should be a means of expressing one's internal world, and children should be encouraged to write what is meaningful to them. Ashida believed it was important to recognize the uniqueness of individual students. Such belif led him to encourage students to write essays honestly incorporating their genuine feelings and opinions. He saw these unique voices, personalities, and experiences as being the essence of writing.

Ashida never sought standardized instruction or evaluation in writing. He believed that if there were 30 students in the class, there should be 30 different writings. The topic each student choose would differ and the way the student wrote should vary since the way the individual student felt about the topic he/she chose was not the same (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

Ashida's beliefs were amplified by Miekichi Suzuki. Suzuki published the first edition of *Akai Tori* [Red Bird], a literature magazine for young students, in 1918 (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). The editors of *Akai Tori* intended to stimulate and foster the literature potentials of young Japanese children by exposing them to aesthetic writings while encouraging them to write realistically. In the first issue of *Akai Tori*, Suzuki passionately expressed his desire to inspire children's writing, "Write everything you see, hear and feel as they are and send them to me. It does not matter whether it is long or short. Send me something real" (Suzuki, in Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987).

Publication of *Akai Tori* inspired teachers throughout the nation, especially young passionate teachers who had appreciated realism literature, to eagerly promote innovative writing education. Nurturing of the sensitive talents of their students through promotion of sensory writing became popular with educators who sympathized with Suzuki's idea (Kokubun, 1955).

Although the writing movement inspired by Suzuki gained support by the public and influenced the writing education in Japan greatly, this writing

education elicited some criticisms concerning the objectives of the *Akai Tori*, which were to search for the literary talent of young students and to promote such talent (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). Such purpose caused doubt among teachers in practicing life experience writing along the lines initiated by Suzuki. The teachers believed that actual lives of the students should not be seen as a means by which produce good literary works. What meant the most for the educators were the children and their lives, not literary works produced by those children. Therefore, the teachers chose to use writing only as one of the means to find out their students' lives (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). Teaching students skills to produce refined written work did not mean a great deal to them, except in terms of enabling their students to express themselves.

Another criticism of *Akai Tori* was directed toward the fact that the magazine made judgments on children's writings. Because editors selected a few children's writings and published them, subscribers were persuaded to write in a certain way (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). Even though the editors did not select certain writings to convey explicit differences between good writings and poor ones, a standard for good writing was established in the subscriber's mind. Further, the fact that certain types of writing were praised in the magazine compelled the students to write in a way which is likely to be favored by the editors (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987).

It is ironic that the aim of Suzuki, the originator of *Red Bird* was to divert writers' attention from following models to creating original works by emphasizing free expression of unique experiences. Although promoting a new literacy movement was successful in preventing students from using elaborate words and complicated structures as they had seen in the traditional writing models, the new writing movement promoted by *Akai Tori* inadvertently created a new type of model for the children to follow.

Another criticism concerning *Akai Tori* was directed toward the exclusion of children who lived in an economically deprived environment (Asanuma, 1983). Such exclusion took place due to the fact that the majority of *Akai Tori* editors preferred delicate and lyrical writing and exclusively selected such writing as a good model. Children who were able to produce such writings were limited to the middle class bourgeois who were free from serious concern of financial difficulties in everyday life (Asanuma, 1983). Children in rural farming areas, who had to work hard to survive everyday life as farmers in a harsh natural environment and oppressive feudalistic structures of the community, were incapable of producing such writing. The literary works presented in *Akai Tori* were nothing like what country children saw in their lives, so children from rural areas were excluded from the writing movement promoted and praised in *Akai Tori* (Asanuma, 1983).

Second Period : the Mid. 1920s Through 1940

Sasaoka is one of the major life experience writing practitioners who questioned the writing education promoted by *Red Bird* editors. Sasaoka agreed with Suzuki in his philosophy of writing internal experiences honestly. However, Sasaoka's belief concerning the purpose of writing conflicted with that of Suzuki. For Suzuki, the purpose of writing was to express one's genuine feelings from inside. In other words, writing itself was the purpose of writing for Suzuki. In contrast, Sasaoka believed that writing is merely one of the means to know oneself and his/her life so that one can identify the problems in his/her life and later make changes (Nihon Sakubun no kai, 1958).

In 1929, Sasaoka published the first issues of *Tsudurikata Seikatsu,* [Life of Writing]. Through publishing this magazine, Sasaoka wished to support children who suffered from poverty and the oppression of a totalitarian government. He further aimed to provide courage and wisdom to these children so that they could survive in this difficult world. A number of young teachers in small rural rice growing villages, especially in the northeastern part of Japan sympathized with Sasaoka's beliefs (Tsurumi, 1970).The northeastern areas of Japan are characterized by its remaining in strong feudalistic traditions, along with a harsh climate which causes low rice production, and poverty as a consequence of its severe environment (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

Sasaoka's idea of empowering students through writing strongly enticed the hearts of teachers who taught in such a deplorable environment.

The second period of life experience writing took place in the middle of the 1920s to 1930s, mostly in the northern area of Japan, and it is characterized by unique ideas about the purposes of writing. During this time, one of the purposes for writing was to lead students to identify contradictions existing in the social structures. Through critically writing and analyzing their lives, students often identified an undemocratic system of production (Asanuma, 1983). For example, tenant farmers were placed into a structure in which they were being systematically exploited. In such an unscrupulous system of production, where tenants had to give a certain set portion of the harvest to the landowners as a rent, the more harvest the tenants had, the more wealth and power the authority acquired. The landowners who automatically obtained more wealth and power dominated their tenants more severely with their power and strengthened the system to bring more fortune to the authority.

Looking into this contradictory system showed that a commonly shared moral ethic, "working hard for the betterment of life", would not alter the situation (Muchaku, 1951). Being aware of such reality and taking necessary intelligent actions were promoted through life experience writing. Students were at first instructed to observe their lives carefully and describe them precisely (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). Recording one's own experiences was the first step to

legitimizing the individual student's knowledge and insights gained by personal experiences. This process was essential in constructing one's own perspectives and critically examining the authorities' perspectives (Sasai, 1981). Under the influence of education in which the imposition of fixed ideas and perspectives were dominant, life experience writing education contributed greatly to liberate the students, awakening their insights and understanding of social phenomena.

The second purpose of life experience writing was to build a sense of community among the students with strong emphasis on working together ultimately to alter the society (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). After this initial writings, students presented their written work to the class. The class discussed the issues expressed in the compositions not as an individual's problems but as the problems of the class, problems of their community and problems of the society. The goal of the class for life experience writing teachers was for an individual student's sorrow to become everyone's sorrow, and an individual student's happiness to become every student's happiness (Kokubun, 1955).

Since Sasaoka, life experience writing has become more than just a technique one uses in writing. Through writing, students' critical thinking skills were nurtured by enabling the students to identify the problems within their lives and to further analyze the cause of the problems embedded in the social structures. Writing was the way to empower the students so that they would have the courage and intelligence necessary to liberate themselves from oppressive

situations (Tsurumi, 1970). Such beliefs of life experience writing teachers in the northern area of Japan elicited great recognition from the public. This literacy movement soon expanded its practice to village organizations for young adults and among the factory workers in major cities (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

While life experience writing was promoted by rigorous teachers, education in Japan, under the militaristic government, was mandated to move the opposite direction. Due to the market crash in late 1929, international trade shrank, and Japan was forced to resort to a nationalistic economic policy of self-sufficiency, which immediately put the Japanese economy into stagnation. To resolve the economic problems, the government invaded the nearby Asian countries (Reischauer, 1988).

During the 1930s, the military continued to gain greater power in government and succeeded in taking total control of the government in 1940 by establishing the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (Reischauer, 1988). The military government, which sought expansion of economic and military power in Japan through strong leadership, enforced subordination of citizens by restricting individuals' freedom of speech(Yamazumi, 1993). They intended to indoctrinate citizens so that they would not question the government or identify the contradictions which existed in the society.

Such government policy influenced education, inhibiting thinking and discouraging the expression of opinions. The purpose of education was

concentrated on developing obedient citizens who would contribute to the government by achieving its goals (Yamazumi, 1993). Under this oppressive atmosphere, life experience writing became a target for severe criticism (Sasai, 1981). They accused life experience writing teachers by saying that they intended to liberate students by letting students express themselves freely were trapped by a stratagem of western colonization (Kokubun, 1955).

As the war was prolonged, the control of the military government intensified. Citizens who indicated disagreement toward the government became targets of accusation and they were arrested under the anti-Japan-activity law in 1940 (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). Many life experience writing teachers also were imprisoned. According to Kitagawa and Kitagawa (1987), 135 teachers were arrested by the end of 1942, of whom 10 died while they were imprisoned. Many of the teachers were dismissed on disciplinary grounds. The life experience writing movement was completely suppressed until the end of World War II.

The Third Period : 1945 through the 1950s

Japan had surrendered to the allied forces in 1945. The American occupational army entered Japan and enacted various reforms to democratize and to demilitarize Japan.

Under the promotion of democracy in the nation, life experience writing was initiated again. Educators who rigorously sought democratic education prior

to the war were released from prison. Protection of the freedom of speech allowed the teachers to gain rights to practice the education they believed in. The life experience writing movement gained more support this time than ever before in history (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). The first children's literature magazine *Akatonbo* [Red Dragon Fly] was published in 1945 (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987).

The expansion of life experience writing was also due to great support by teachers who sought new methods in education upon close reflection of their educational practices before and during the war (Oota, 1990). The tragic experience of the war reminded educators that they should not obey authority blindly. One needs to think individually and when one senses that things start to go in the wrong direction, he/she must warn against it to cease it.

The teachers believed that they must teach students to think on their own; see with their own eyes; hear with their own ears. Muchaku (1951) states that the end of the war urgently led him to feel that individuals must decide how they want to live. Intelligence was the power to make choices and decisions on how one can best utilize his potentials, and that education was to empower students' abilities to make their own decisions (Muchaku, 1965).

Many teachers who were determined to pursue democracy and liberation of the students in education, like Muchaku, chose to learn from life experience writing teachers' practices during the pre war period (Oota, 1990). One reason

for this is that they believed that life experience writing which was originated and developed in Japan, more closely matched the mentality of the Japanese students than learning strategies introduced by American educators such as, group learning, debate and social studies during the occupational period (Yamazumi, 1993).

Another reason that the teachers sought their own ways of practicing democratic education was that they discovered the ironies of the New Education (Oota, 1978). The New Education is a type of education implemented in Japan with the advises of American educational specialists to promote democracy in Japanese society after the war (Oota, 1978). However, the actual practice of the New Education was done in undemocratic manner. For example, the content of textbooks which were used in public schools to promote democracy were so irrelevant to students' lives that the students could not think the meaning of democracy or to identify undemocratic elements in their lives. Teaching democracy to students by simply reading such textbooks seemed so undemocratic to some teachers. Muchaku (1951), who practiced life experience writing in his 8th grade class in Yamagata, Japan in 1950s describes the ironies he found in the New Education and the reason why he started life experience writing in his class:

> In a social study text book, there was a description about the life of rural communities. It says "In small villages there are elementary schools and

junior high schools. Since 9 years of education is compulsory in Japan, villages built schools and provide materials and facilities necessary to educate the students magnificently" (Social studies, p.10). However, I realized that I had to lie to my students if I teach this statement as it is. In our classroom, there was no map, there was no single piece of equipment for scientific experiments, the roof of the school building was made of grass, the windows were broken, during the winter time, the snow kept coming in to the room....I wanted to practice "the real education." I wanted the students to reflect on their lives in their village. To construct a better life in the village, the students needed to identify the problems and seek the solution for the problems. So, I had to stop teaching from textbooks.

After I pondered about how I could teach the students better, I came up with an idea to use life experience writing. Our students wrote. We used what students wrote as materials to learn about our village life. We discussed the village life, and actually took some actions to improve our life. (p.312)

In 1951, Muchaku and his 43 students' essays were compiled and was published as *Yamabiko gakko* [Echo from a Mountain School]. The publication of this book triggered a great boom in life experience writing. Educators in Japan were overwhelmed by the rural village junior high school students' critical minds aggressive attitudes, cleverness and passion to improve the society. Kokubun

(1995) states that *Yamabiko gakko* triggered a reemergence of life experience writing in post World War II. The movement was widespread not only in schools but also in the communities and work places (Tsurumi, 1970). Small writing groups were established in various places in Japan (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). For example, housewives in downtown Tokyo and young female workers at textile factories wrote their war experiences and about their lives after the war. Other factory workers in Mie prefecture wrote about their mothers' histories to identify why women in farming villages were poor and unhappy. Their writing was later published as Mothers' Histories (Tsurumi, 1995).

Tsurumi (1995) states that life experience writing was used as a means to restructure the value system of Japanese citizens, especially those who had experienced the war. In 1952, the first meeting of the Japan Composition Association was conducted in Tusgawa City and 1,300 attended the conference (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). The association started monthly publication of *Sakubun Kenkyu* [Composition Study], conducted research on writing education, and organized annual national conferences. For the first time in the history, life experience writing educaion was formally organized as a nationwide movement (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). The 1950s were the golden age of life experience writing education in Japan.

Characteristics of Life Experience Writing

Self-selected Topics

One of the characteristics of life experience writing is that the students are encouraged to chose their own topics to write. Kokubun (1955) states that students must write something which interests them so much that they cannot help but write about it. Self-selected topics enhance students' writing greatly. Because students are normally quite familiar and confident with the content of the topics they choose, they can write about them logically, making clear sense to themselves. Possessing comprehensive knowledge of the topics will also enable students to describe those objects and their experiences with them realistically by providing numerous vivid examples (Kokubun, 1955).

Another advantage of writing on a self-selected topics is that students involve themselves in writing in an emotional manner. Thus, the writers' genuine deep feelings and opinions are manifested clearly in their writing. What is written by students is more than a mere list of facts. It is instead, full of personal insights and feelings.

Personal insights and feelings which emerge through writing are an essential aspect of life experience writing. Shima (1984) proclaims that a writer's heart is shaken when he/she finds something genuine in what is being written. The students' ultimate goal in writing is to find such a heartfelt topic, and I

believe that finding a strong relationship between oneself and what one writes is the key to life experiencing writing.

For life experience teachers, writing is a means for students to discover and understand the self in relationship with the reality around them. Therefore, unlike writing teachers in traditional classrooms, life experience writing teachers do not place value on helping students produce fine pieces of work which would win contests, or in mastering different types of writing such as technical writing, creative writing, or business writings. In their classes the teachers' attention is concentrated on guiding their students to orient themselves to certain realities (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

Writing in One's Own Words

Writing in informal language, with which the writer is familiar, is another characteristic of life experience writing. Many life experience writing teachers are apprehensive about students' eagerness to write in elaborate language using complicated structures. Students who place their focus on producing sophisticated writings are not acquainted with the topic. They are also not quite sure of the content of their own essay. The model writings offered by official curriculum developers contain lists of perfectly "correct" ideas expressed in appropriate language, but such writings do not delight life experience writing teachers. Instead, they frighten the teachers because the model writings sound too mature and the students' ideas are not presented in them(Kokubun, 1955).

Writing which is not written in students' own words is awkward to life experience teachers. When students write for the purpose of producing a piece of work close to the model writing, the student's motive is to display their knowledge, so that expressions used by scholars and professional writers dominate their writing (Kokubun, 1955). Writing by following the model diminishes the genuine purposes of writing which are to reflect on one's life experiences and share them with others.

Students tend to write in a strictly conventional way because of the way they are taught to write in traditional schools (Nihon sakubun no kai, 1958). In traditional schools, the students are given models of writing at first, and then they are instructed to write something on their own just by slightly substituting words into the model. Great diversion from the model is discouraged in writing classes (Nihon sakubun no kai, 1958). Life experience writing teachers disagree with the idea of enforcing students to imitate the model in writing. They discourage the use of language students are not accustomed to, because using someone else's language, during the thinking and writing process estranges students from their thoughts and emotions (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). The following are examples of the typical writing promoted in traditional writing classes:

> According to our teachers, Japan is enriched by marine products. My father is passionate about marine business, and his hope is to build a foundation of developing marine

businesses in Japan. Therefore, upon the graduation of junior school, I hope to take after his business and invest my energy and capital for my father's business, so that citizens in Japan will understand the importance of marine industry (Junior high school student, in Kokubun and Imai, 1973 p. 216).

Reflecting on our current life , I realize that it was not sound and happy. The fundamental problem is that we do not have the right state of mind. To be able to have a happy life, we need to have the correct state of mind. To be able to do that we need to move forward in the right direction (8th grade student, in Kokubun and Imai, 1973, p. 178).

As presented in these examples, the students tend to simply write what they are told by their teachers and parents (Imai, 1972). Their original ideas, thoughts, emotions, and personalities are not presented at all in their writings. In addition, expressions used by these students are not natural for students of this age. Students in traditional writing classes are expected to internalize abstract concepts unrelated to their life experiences and to use them to express their ideas for so many years while in school. Such training disables students' abilities to think on their own and express themselves in their own language. Using other's words is the greatest hindrance to democratic education, because writing

and thinking in someone else's language lead one to be dominated by the thoughts of others.

Language is an useful and indispensable tool for thinking. By using language one can interact with realities indirectly regardless of time and location. Without language our life would be limited to a concrete world consisting of realities which are only visible and audible for the particular moment. Only with the use of language, are we able to interact with phenomena beyond our physical restrictions and to have an intellectually enriched life (Ogawa, 1973).

However, language has limits also. The limits lie in the fact that language is a representation of a reality and it is not a reality itself. In other words, reality and language do not overlap each other exactly. The gap takes place because one must interpret reality in the process of connecting realities with language. No language is free from the speaker's interpretation of reality. We also need to note the fact that the interpretation of reality is not free from one's experience of the reality. To understand what something is, one has to experience it. Interpretation of certain reality is a result of interaction between a person and the event. Kokubun (1959) states that one who knows how to use language is the one who can use the words derived from his/her experiences with sincerity.

Only when one is able to provide his/her own meaning and emotions to reality by experiencing it, is one in control of his own thought. As long as one uses language strongly connected with his experience of the reality, one will not

depart from one's feelings and experiences completely, no matter how much they use the language for thinking. On the contrary, one will be in danger of being estranged from oneself when one depends on someone else's language in expressing his thought.

Using another's language means that one is using an interpretation of reality connected to another's experiences and feelings and not their own. Therefore, overusing another's language will result in internalization of another's feelings and their world views (Ogawa, 1973). When overwhelmed by another's views, one is controlled not only by the words, but by the world of anothers which is represented by their language. As Ogawa (1973) states, people who are accustomed to using another's language are easily manipulated by others.

Since writing and thinking are inseparable, writing in another's language will often result in producing some writings which do not even make sense to oneself or writings whose content contradicts one's own feelings and thoughts. Therefore using language which is derived from oneself is an essential factor in authentic writing.

Writing Honestly

Another characteristic of life experience writing is that students are encouraged to write honestly. Kokubun (1955) states that students are regularly hesitant in expressing their genuine feelings in writing. For example, when students are given an assignment to write about their mothers, they generally

write a description of an image of the typical Japanese mother who is kind, pretty, and caring. The following examples written by junior high school students in Japan demonstrate the type of writing considered ideal in regular writing classrooms:

> My mother is a very caring mother. She will never forget about her children. I should always apprecite my mother (Junior High school Student, in Kokubun, 1955, p. 122).

> I apologized to my mother. Knowing the poverty of our family, I selfishly insisted upon having a new pair of shoes. Holding my new shoes against my chest, I cried quietly... Thinking about my mother's kindness, I felt full of appreciation (Shounen Kurabu Yanami Sokukichi, in Kokubun, 1955, p. 11).

In these writings, the students are putting their mothers into the mold of the ideal Japanese mother. The uniqueness of the mother and the sincerity the writer have toward their mothers are hardly disclosed in these compositions. The genuiness is hidden behind the elaborate words and an ideal model of a mother which may not coincide with the real picture of these students' mothers. From this writing, it is difficult to get a true living picture of a mother; mother working strenuously in rice fields all day long, taking care of her children and husband, and managing the housekeeping when she returns home. The mother

may be exhausted and not have time to show compassion to her children. However, none of these are expressed in their writings.

A mother who is struggling hard to make ends meet may have to force a young child to work at night, although knowing it will take time away from completing his/her school assignments. The following compositions about "mothers" and "fathers" written by students in life experience writing classrooms present realities of their parents vividly:

> Yesterday I had homework to do for my language art class. When I tried to do the assignment, my mother told me to get water. I did not want to but I stopped studying and got the water. After I had finished the work, I started to study. Now my father told me " We are going to go to the beach to set the net for fish." My mother said, "Go there right away. You can study whenever you come back from work." So again, I stopped studying and went to the beach.
>
> My father was already there and said, "A fishermen's son does not need to study." He was mad and he looked like a fish. When I finished working and got home, it was already eight o'clock. My Mother and father said I had better go to bed. I told my parents, "Mother said that I can study after work. "My father yelled at me, "You have to go to bed. You must get up early tomorrow morning and work" (8th grade students, in Ogawa ,1973, p. 118).

> Reiko swallowed a pin. She wasn't careful. She just swallowed it. My father got angry. My father got angry because my brother Katsuichi died from an accident. My father got really angry. My father cried. He talked about my dead brother Katusichi in a sad voice. My father is old. He is loosing hair and his back is not straight anymore. Before I did not like my father drinking sake, but I thought it was ok for him to drink tonight. My father's face is dark from Sunburn. He bent his back and was sitting in front of the stove. It was hard for me to see my father (7th grade student, in Imai, 1972, p. 109).

These writings reveal the writers' lived experiences and true reflections about their experiences. In addition, these concrete descriptions of their lives reveal the important issues which exist in children's lives. Disclosing these issues is essential in life experience writing since it provides the class a chance to broaden their world views and acknowledge the problems in their lives that need to be solved.

Besides providing authentic text to be utilized in the classroom, there are more reasons that life experience writing teachers encourage students to write honestly. One of the primary advantages of writing the truth is that the students' subtle psychological status and their complicated home environment are precisely manifested in the writing, enabling teachers to understand students

better (Kokubun, 1955). In Japanese schools where there are approximately 40 to 50 students in one class, it is difficult for teachers to be well acquainted with individual students and to provide help to them depending on their needs (Kokubun, 1955). Under such condition, writing is a very useful tool for teachers to acquaint themselves with their students and interact with them more closely.

Another merit of writing the truth is that it allows students to recognize the reality of their own lives and identify the hidden problems in their lives through writing. As in the above example, through observing and writing about their mothers honestly, the students find that their mothers are not like a typical mother as described in other books. Finding such truth is an initial step for life experience writing education. For example, children who observe and describe their mothers truthfully through writing would start to think about why their mothers are the way they are, instead of being the way they want their mothers to be. Examination of the issue should lead the children to see the traditional family structure which burdens women, or the economical structure which does not enable small farmers to overcome poverty to seek solutions to their problems.

One of the common feudalistic values entangling the Japanese citizen are the Confucian beliefs that put women and youngsters on a lower status and forcing them to be submissive to superiors (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). Another fixed idea prevalent among Japanese is praise of materialism,

supporting the hierarchical structure currently existing in the society (Kokubun, 1955). Such ideas prescribe that one must study and work hard to obtain high status and material wealth in their life, and attribute their poor financial status to laziness and lack of ability. In addition, they lead one to look up to those of higher social status while making one to feel ashamed for not having wealth.

The other false value hindering democracy which is dominant in the society, is the sacrifice of individual's rights and needs for the purpose of achieving group goals (Kokubun, 1955). To emancipate students from such fixed ideas and to guide them to be independent thinkers, the life experience writing teachers promoted construction of personal knowledge and world views through careful observation of their lives and reflections upon them (Kokubun, 1955).

Establishing one's own understanding of phenomena is important, because without which one cannot critically examine the correctness of the reality presented to him/her by the authority or identify the problems present in his/her life. Life experience writing teachers believe that writing is the way to develop rational attitudes necessary to identify problems in society (Tsurumi, 1970). Through writing, students are emancipated from the world views created by others. Kokubun (1955) states that writing provides a sense of freedom for individuals and strengthens it. Through writing, students examine phenomena carefully and develop strong relationships between themselves and the phenomena they are writing about. This process validates the students' voices

and motivates them to express and act upon their beliefs, enabling to liberate students from their limited perspectives and socially supported beliefs.

Writing in Detail

Another characteristic of life experience writing is that students write in detail. Teachers often advise students to accurately reconstruct their experiences on paper by looking back over every details of a scene by giving proofs (Imai, 1972). Some exercises for practicing writing in detail in life experience writing classes are as follows: a teacher acts out a series of gestures in front of the class without speaking, and then hw/she asks his/her students to write a paragraph precisely describing what they saw in detail, as if they are sketching a picture. Writing assignments such as writing about what happened during a short period of time are also given to practice reconstructing one's past experiences precisely (Kokubun, 1959). For example, students describe specifically the process of walking to school one morning.

After students are accustomed to writing detailed descriptions of scenes, they are encouraged to move to another level, the description of internal experiences. In describing internal experiences, the students write not only who said what, but also how they felt when they heard certain statements and why they came to feel that way (Kokubun, 1955).

By writing in detail, students can free themselves from fixed ideas, and find the strong relationship between one's self and the object without any

interruptions from outside(Shima, 1984). To write is the first step in reconstructing reality by interpreting what the students have been seen. The students will first project the object into their souls to feel. Second, they will engrave the shape of the object deeply into their minds by describing it carefully and sincerely using written language. Through this process the children internalize the reality which exists outside themselves and relate it to their own feelings and experiences. What has been internalized is reflected and examined carefully within their internal system. As a result, students come to understand not only the sphere of the reality but a more authentic part of the reality, the essential elements which distinguish themselves from others (Kokubun, 1955).

When students write in detail, they must use all their senses, actively trying to interact with the object using body and mind. When they are in the midst of experience, they are not clear about what they are seeing. However, by writing in detail, one reflects and examines the reality carefully, so that objects or phenomena they intend to describe become more clear to themselves (Nihon sakubun no kai, 1958). Through this process, the relationship between oneself and the reality become clear and an emotional involvement takes place.

In schools and communities where a feudalistic atmosphere is still prevalent, students are not accustomed to thinking on their own and to establishing their own perspectives. The students tend to merely memorize isolated pieces of knowledge presented to them, instead of carefully studying

objects and phenomena (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). However, through encouragement of writing in detail, life experience writing teachers have rigorously guided students to acquire the means to recognize realities and generate some universal rules in the society on their own (Kokubun, 1955).

Cooperation in the Class

Another characteristics of life experience writing is a cooperative relationship between students and teachers in the class. The strongly united relationship among students is established by sharing individual student's writing in class (Kokubun, 1955). Life experience writing teachers see essays written by students as extraordinary materials for authentic learning. By reading a classmate's writing and discussing the important issues involved in the topic, students hear various opinions on the topic and broaden their perspectives. In addition to exchanging individual views on the issue, the students discuss the nature of differences among their views and causes for such differences (Kokubun, 1955).

The discussions in class provide a great opportunity for young Japanese students to prepare themselves for developing an attitude necessary for a democratic society (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958). One of the obstacles Japanese students face in achieving a democratic attitude is facing an opinion contradicting their own. The students have to learn to hold an objective attitude and listen to others, examining each other's opinions carefully. Dealing with

different views without being offended or aggravated is hard for typical Japanese students, who are brought up in a culture where confrontations are avoided (Reischauer, 1988). As our old saying states, "A nail which sticks up above the rest is pounded," meaning that someone who stands out in the crowd tends to be punished in Japanese society.

Japanese students often falsely believe that being different is equal to being wrong. However, one must overcome such false traditional beliefs nurtured in a society where collectivism was emphasized. To achieve democracy in which participation of individuals is indispensable, one must understand that being different from others and expressing one's own opinions are not indicative of a negative character. Further, the Japanese need to be aware that rigorous discussions on issues should not be avoided, and the emergence of conflicting opinion during vital discussions needs to be accepted as normal if we are to pursue democracy. In a life experience writing classroom, students learn that confrontation itself is not negative. There are meaningful confrontations which take place in the process of cooperatively achieving a democratic society and happiness for all (Kokubun, 1955).

Besides learning the importance of being direct with each other, sharing each other's writing gives students a chance to become better acquainted with each other. Students find that the observable personality of a classmate is only one aspect of that person(Shima, 1984). What is written in the composition

provides an overall view of the person which enables one to see the person as an integrated whole in a social and historical context including what the student does outside the school, what he/she has done before entering school, and what he/she wants to do after leaving school.

In addition, the deep feeling of student, something which resides inside of students and rarely manifests itself on the surface level, is revealed through writing. Since students hardly see each other's inner selves through regular interactions with others in classrooms, reading other students' writings is one of the precious chance to get to know each other deeply (Ogawa, 1973). By touching other students' internal feelings, deep sorrows and happiness, expressed in their classmates' writings, students come to understand each other better. Kokubun (1951) states that educators need to help students to learn that unification with others are made possible by exchanging the internal feelings (Ogawa, 1973).

For establishment of trust and close interaction between teacher and students, teachers must take initiatives in approaching students. Kokubun (1955) further states that excellent teachers are the ones who are being themselves. They will never flatter nor do they try to impress students. Instead, the teachers make their best effort in honestly revealing who they are to the students. Being at ease, the teachers create an atmosphere where students can say anything to others in the class (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

Life experience writing teachers encourage students to write what their students are worried or concerned about, and they are ready to listen to the problems students have, whether directly related to school work or not. The teachers care about the students and do everything possible to help the students. Obviously, the purpose of this behavior is not raising the score on standardized tests. Their goals are to rescue students from current difficulties and to provide students with intelligence and passion, which enable them to survive in this difficult world (Kokubun, 1955).

In reading students' writings, life experience teachers focus on the content of the essay rather than structures, and comment on what students have to say. The teachers pay close attention to students' opinions, and respond with personal comments (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). When the students express problems at home, the teacher and the class respond with sincerity and encouragement, asking questions which would stimulate the student to understand the cause of the problems and to generate solutions (Shima, 1984). What is common among life experience writing teachers is that they care about the students and want the best for the students. Based on a strong caring attitude geared toward the students, a genuine trustworthy relationship between students and teachers is established (Imai, 1972).

Through education, life experience writing teachers aim to achieve true democracy, a system in which individual members are respected equally, and

are allowed to make a subjective contributions to the improvement of the society. In order to achieve of a democratic society, fostering independence and critical attitudes among individuals who compose the society is essential. Without individuals' opinions, a democratic system cannot function.

Establishment of Controlled Education

Educational Reform Under Hatoyama's Regime

Japanese education underwent drastic changes from the middle of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1960s. Education was initially conducted to promote democracy in Japanese society when World War II ended, but it gradually became a tool of expanding economic and military power as threats from communist nations increased. An event which marked the turning point in Japanese education was the inauguration of Hatoyama as Prime Minister of Japan in 1954. As soon as Hatoyama became the Prime Minister, he proclaimed the immediate need of educational reform saying that the current Japanese educational system which had been created by American occupational forces to govern Japan could not respond to the needs of Japanese society which had changed greatly since 1945 (Kikuchi, 1983). According to Hatoyama the focus of educational reform should be the enforcement of patriotism and the strengthening of the federal government's power in guiding and advising the content of education (Kikuchi, 1983). This statement implies that this reform is

equivalent to the revival of a totalitarian military education which existed in Japan before and during World War II. The establishment of controlled education took place rapidly through numerous pieces of legislations which restricted the rights and freedoms of the public, teachers, and textbook publishers in reflecting their views in education.

Legislation Regarding Structure and Function of Local School Board

After World War II, the local school board was established in every city and town throughout Japan. To reflect the opinions of community members in education, the board members were selected by community members through elections (Yamazumi, 1993). However, the legislation proposed in 1956, regarding the organization and function of the local school board, intended to abolish the election for board members. The proposal suggested that state school board members be appointed by senators, city educational board members be appointed by mayors, and the chiefs of the state educational board to be approved by the Minister of Education (Araki, 1986).

The Ministry of Education publicly stated that the appointee system would be more suitable than the current election system in selecting appropriate board members who possess qualities necessary for performing their responsibilities, such as a profound knowledge of academics and culture and a neutral political stance. However, their genuine intention hidden behind passing this proposal was to exclude members of the teachers' union from school boards (Oota,

1978). The power and influence of the teachers' union that confronted the government's expanding control over education was a great threat to the Ministry of Education. Fear of the union's influence over education urged them to reduce and eventually terminate such power. Abolishing the election system of board members which allowed great numbers of teachers' union members to hold seats on local school boards was the government's first step forward in exterminating the union. The appointee system benefited the government in terms of carrying out their task of suppressing the power of the teachers' union. The majority of senators and mayors in local communities were members of the Liberal Democratic Party, who supported the existing government policies, and it was obvious that these senators and mayors would appoint board members who would willingly cooperate with the intended educational reform planned by the government.

The legislation harmed democratic education in Japan in two major ways. One, it deprived citizens of their rights to appoint their representatives to school boards, which meant the deprivation of their rights of participation in an important decision making process regarding educational issues. The other problem was the exclusion of members who possessed different views about education from those of the government. The fact that the government party steamrollered the bill through against a strong opposition is extremely undemocratic (Araki, 1986).

The success of passing this proposal in 1956 was the initial great step toward the government's goal of reforming Japanese education. This law forced the submission of local educational organizations to the central power, the Ministry of Education, led by the Liberal Democratic Party. It was the beginning of the centralization of the entire educational process and the expansion of controlled education in Japan.

Legislation Regarding Textbooks

The second major point of educational reform was the regulation of textbooks. The government intended to control the content of textbooks by strengthening inspection and by restricting the number of publishers who could supply textbooks to public schools. This proposal was meant to restrict freedom of publication and the use of textbooks which had been promoted since 1945 (Oota, 1978).

The legislation concerned with the issue and selection of textbooks was first proposed in 1956. The proposal of this legislation elicited strong opposition from the public. Six hundred scholars and artists called for the abolishment of this law, stating that it was practically a reemergence of a nationally standardized textbook, intended to control citizens' minds and invade their freedom of thought and academics (Araki, 1986). In response to such strong opposition and financial difficulties, the government had to withdrawal the proposal (Araki, 1986; Yamazumi, 1993).

In spite of the failure in passing the textbook legislation, the government did not cease its pursuit in expanding control over the content of textbooks. To supplement the defeat in passing the textbook regulation proposal, the Ministry of Education strengthened the inspection process of textbooks by establishing a new textbook inspection team composed of forty full-time inspectors in 1956 (Araki, 1986). They defended the necessity of severe inspections by stating that many textbooks had been written by authors under the influence of communist ideas and that students should be freed from the danger of being indoctrinated by communists (Oota, 1978; Yamazumi, 1993).

The heightened severity of inspection lead to the rejection of great numbers of textbooks which would normally have passed inspection in the past. According to a report issued by the organization of publication workers, unreasonable excuses were given to textbook authors as reasons for failing the inspections (Araki, 1986). For example, overemphasis on basic human rights or negative conduct of Japanese militarism were commonly cited (Arakil, 1986). Although the

publishers disagreed with the strengthened inspections, they were forced to adjust the content of the textbooks voluntarily based on the expectation of the Ministry of Education, because issuing textbooks which could pass the inspection was necessary to secure sales.

The government's eagerness to take control over the content of textbooks continued. Finally, in November 1961, the Minister of Education, Araki, made the proposal to Congress regarding providing textbooks to students free of charge (Yamazumi, 1993). Although the title of the proposal was "Proposal of the Free Supply of Textbooks," the main themes of this proposal were various regulations which accompanied the free textbooks. The regulations promoted the standardization of textbooks by limiting the variety of textbooks to be used in public schools. For example, the proposal suggested that the government would designate wide scale regions composed of several public school districts, and the members of regional textbook selection committees would select the textbooks to be used in the schools within that region (Araki, 1986). Such a system reduced the variety of textbooks. The attempt to standardize textbooks was advanced further by limiting the textbooks which would be available for selection by the regional committees to the ones which were issued by publishers designated by the Ministry of Education (Araki, 1986).

The idea of providing textbooks to students is in agreement with the idea of free public education which guaranteed every child an equal opportunity to receive an education. This idea itself should not be criticized. However, forcing students to receive whatever they were given without any complaint in return for free gift should not be appreciated. As the "Proposal of the Free Supply of

Textbooks" passed the Congress in 1961, students were again deprived of their freedom in education.

Teacher Evaluation Policy

In 1957 the proposal of a teacher evaluation policy was submitted to the National Council of Education (Oota, 1978). In this proposal, the idea of cutting the salary and banning the promotion of teachers receiving low scores on the evaluations were presented. The evaluations were to be conducted by the principals of individual public schools, based on eleven criteria such as responsibility, adaptation, participation, comprehensibility, cooperation, and knowledge of education. A scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used to evaluate teachers' performance on these eleven criteria and their total scores were ranked and compared with those of other teachers in the same school. Teachers' salaries were determined by the ranking of their evaluation scores; the teachers who ranked at the top received a higher promotion and those who ranked low received the largest deduction from their standard salary (Araki, 1986).

Local government proclaimed that the reason for implementing teacher evaluations was to reduce their deficit caused by a lack of financial support from federal government since 1950.(Yamazumi, 1993). It was true that local governments were in great financial difficulties. However, there were three important reason for implementing the teacher evaluation policy instead of choosing other means to overcome the financial difficulty. The first purpose was

to identify the active members of the teachers union through use of a column to describe teachers' professional and academic affiliations included in the evaluation (Oota, 1978). The second purpose of implementing this policy was to create competition and separation among teachers to dissolve their unity (Araki, 1986). Ranking teachers' performances and determining their salary based on their "excellence" in comparison to others, caused teachers to isolate themselves from and be suspicious of other teachers. Another reason for implementation of the evaluation was to discourage teacher autonomy. The fact that the items on the evaluation were very subjective directed teachers' focus to maintaining a sound relationship with the principal rather than improving their teaching performances to obtain a good salary (Araki, 1986).

The implementation of teacher evaluations triggered a great opposition movement by school teachers, which reached its peak in the spring of 1958 (Yamazumi, 1993). Many community meetings were organized by teachers to bring attention to the crisis in democratic education and to solicit support from the public. Also the teachers attempted to keep principals from participating in the evaluations which were actively conducted in a number of schools throughout Japan (Yoshida, Nagao and Shibata, 1979). However, the coalition and passion of the teachers were unable to block the dominating power of conservative politicians. Although many principals were originally sympathetic with the teachers and assisted them in protecting their autonomy, they could not

help but submit evaluations and switch to the side of authority when they faced the risk of losing their positions (Kida, 1981). By the end of 1958, 36 prefectures out of 47 submitted to the teacher evaluation. Finally in 1958 at the National Conference of Teachers Union, recognition of defeat in this struggle over the teacher evaluation policy was stated (Araki, 1986).

Revision of Instructional Guidelines in 1958

The following strategy for establishing a controlling system in Japanese education was the revision of instructional guidelines in 1958 (Araki, 1986). The major focus of the revision was to legalize the guidelines. When instructional guidelines were first developed in Japan in 1947, the Ministry of Education stated that the guideline would be merely a reference for teachers to use in developing lessons which would meet both the student's and society's needs. (Oota, 1978; Yamazumi, 1993).

Another major point of the revision was to include moral education in the curriculum. The emphasis placed on raising a patriotic attitude toward the nation and the emperor through reading materials and songs used in moral education classes led liberal teachers to warn against implementation of moral education (Araki, 1986). They saw it as a reemergence of Shushin, moral training, which had been the major pillar of Japanese military education in which students had been taught the attitude of absolute obedience to the nation, thus opening the door to fascism (Araki, 1986; Yamazumi, 1993). However, the government who

felt the need for increasing patriotism among citizens to prepare for military expansions during the cold war was very adamant about the implementation of moral education.

When the revision of instructional guidelines was first proposed in 1958, the teachers who were coiled together strongly against the teacher evaluation policies movement fought against the revisions of instructional guidelines also. However, in spite of the opposition, the government made an official announcement of implementation of instructional guidelines in October (Araki, 1986). After this defeat, the teachers who had persistently sought autonomy in teaching formed private educational research groups to develop a curriculum independently, and to articulate the problems included in the instructional guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education (Yamazumi, 1993). Although these teachers were persistent in their resistance to controlled education, their efforts have not been brought under the spotlights in mainstream education since then.

Gradually over the ten years following the revision of curriculum in 1958, the government succeeded in increasing its emphasis on raising the loyalty of the nation through the national curriculum (Araki, 1986). In the revision of the guidelines in 1968, a description of teaching students to respect and love the emperor as a symbol of unity of the Japanese nation was included in the moral education textbooks. In addition, the legends about the creation of Japan, which

imply that the emperor is the descendant of the god who created the country, were incorporated in history textbooks (Araki, 1986). Such action is obviously the reemergence of Shuushin education for militarism.

Construction of the Examination System

To strengthen the controlled educational system, the government initiated the implementation of a national standardized test in 1961. This test consisted of five subjects; Japanese, English, Social Studies, Natural Science, and Math, and it measured students' mastery of knowledge of these subjects as they were presented in the instructional guidelines (Araki, 1986).

The test restricted teachers' academic freedoms greatly because the scores of the test were not only used to determine the prospective academic and occupational route students must take, but also to judge teachers' ability to instruct their students. Teachers were pressured to accept the idea that good teaching is to help students make high scores on standardized tests by assisting their students in mastering the content of the instructional guidelines accurately and efficiently.

The national standardized test itself did not succeed in a continuation due to opposition and cheating (Yamazumi, 1993). However, the government's intention of convincing teachers to follow the instructional guidelines was made possible by the severe competition fostered by high school and college entrance examinations whose content strictly paralleled that of the instructional guidelines.

At present, rigid categorization of students based on their academic achievement has strengthened the severity of entrance examinations along with unconscious but very strong acceptance of the notion of compliance with the instructional guidelines by Japanese teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in this study to identify respondents, collect data and analyze the data. The qualitative approach was selected because beliefs and assumptions regarding reality in our living world and the way to understand them coincided with mine. They were also suitable for the purpose of the study I intended to conduct.

A qualitative approach believes in the existence of multiple realities (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993). In other words, it assumes that realities which are gained through observations and interpretations of one situation do not apply to other situations. Therefore, unlike scientific researchers, qualitative researchers are not interested in identifying a single reality and generalizing it to other circumstances. Instead, qualitative researchers attempt to create a text composed of detailed rich description or interpretation of reality so that readers can use the text to reflect on their experiences, to find the meaning of certain phenomena, or to determine the applicability of the findings in their own settings (Crabtree and Miller, 1992).

Another assumption of the qualitative approach which I agreed with is that human beings are "meaning giving beings and the meanings are important in understanding human behaviors" (Crabtree and Miller, 1992, p. 111). I did not believe that isolating certain variables of human behaviors and explaining the relationship among these variables by using the data gained through superficially observing the behaviors and phenomena enables one to understand them deeply. As van Manen states (1990), human behaviors are complex and it takes a thoughtful and reflective process within oneself and active conversational relation with the objects of inquiry to understand them.

Another assumption which led me to choose qualitative approach in my study was that human behavior and its meaning can only be understood within the context of the action. van Manen (1990) states that he intends to understand authentic human behavior, action and interpretation of them "where the subjects are naturally engaged in their world, not in artificially created experiential settings" (p.18).

Based on these beliefs, I chose to use a qualitative approach. Through the use of the qualitative approach, I sought to deepen the understanding of the meaning of the educational experiences of the life experience teachers under controlled education in Japanese public schools. To understand the meaning of their experiences I had dialogue with the teachers who had actual teaching experiences within the context of my interest.

According to Crabtree and Miller (1992), an interpretation is indispensable to achieve a state of understanding. Interpretation means to explain something in the sense of mediating between two parties; interpreted meanings and things toward which the interpretation points (van Manen, 1990). In other words, interpretation is the act of connecting the knower and the known and mediating the relationship between them. I believe the relationship between the knower and the known change constantly, since both parties are not free from values. By interacting with each other, one cannot help but influence the other within the value he/she holds. Bailey (1994) also supports the notion of the instability of the relationship between the knower and the known by stating that what is being interpreted is not constant. According to Crabtree and Miller (1992), the meaning of human action is rarely fixed, clear and unambiguous. It is discovered and rediscovered constantly through ongoing interactions and negotiations between two parties, the knower and the known.

The interpretation of the meaning of experiences strongly reflect the value of these two parties. Therefore, the truth value of the data in this research was not explained by "validity" or "probability, which are used in objective quantitative researches. Instead, I sought the truth value of the interpretation using "credibility." Credibility refers to the match between the reality constructed in the mind of the respondent and reality understood by the researcher (Erlandson et al., 1993). To attain credibility, I sought affirmation from respondents on my

interpretation of their experiences through asking a confirmation question such as "Is this what the experience is really like?" (van Manen, 1990).

Participants

I originally planned to identify three to five current or former public school teachers in Japan who practiced life experience writing education in their classrooms since the 1950s. The selection of participants for the study began by contacting Nihon Sakubun no Kai, the Japan Composition Association, located in Tokyo, Japan. This association has its roots in the life experience writing education and has conducted various activities to promote understanding of life experience writing education. Their activities include publishing monthly composition journals and annual national conferences. Members of this association are mainly school teachers, who support the beliefs of life experience writing education (Nihon Sakubun no Kai, 1958).

The first step in identifying the respondents for the interview was to contact the Japan Composition Association via letter. The letter contained a brief introduction, explanation of my research, and a request for the association to provide assistance in identifying participants for my research, specifically a list of members and their addresses. Approximately a month later, I received a reply indicating that the permanent committee members of the organization had met to discuss the propriety of providing assistance to my research. Their conclusion

was that a list of members should not be given to me since I do not have a membership in the organization. An outsider could have no access to the private information of the organization.

According to Hamaguchi and Kumon (1985) who had conducted studies on Japanese collectivism, the Japanese have a tendency to clearly distinguish between an in-group and an out-group. They identify themselves with the in-group members whom they are emotionally connected. On the other hand, toward the out-group members, they hold suspicions and feelings of competitiveness. As I read this statement, I began to realize the reality that I was at a disadvantage in finding interviewees. I was a complete stranger to the circle of life experience writing teachers. Being a student of a foreign university meant that I was not connected to any of the academic authorities where the members of the organization were familiar with, which left them insecure about me and my research. In order for me to enter the circle of teachers and to conduct the research successfully, there was a need for my knowledge and stance in life experience writing education to be accredited by someone in the inner circle of life experience writing teachers.

Thus, I contacted a professor at Toyo University in Tokyo for help. The professor is known for his decades of research in life experience writing education and I believed this professor could be the one who held the key to my gaining entrance to the inner group of life experience writing teachers. I was

reminded of Hamaguchi and Kumon's statement (1985) that Japanese are not connected by ideas but by emotions, so in the letter addressed to the professor, I made an effort to convey who I am by passionately describing the reason that I was interested in studying life experience writing and how I felt about the topic in relation to my own personal educational experiences in Japanese and American schools. I also stated the purpose and significance of the study precisely in a letter that was informal.

I received a letter from the professor within a few weeks. He suggested that I visit him in May in Japan to discuss my research in detail. The meeting was arranged to confirm that my research was firmly rooted in an awareness of the issue before he offered help in finding respondents. The professor and one of his graduate students offered to provide to me the names of five life experience writing teachers whom they believed to be appropriate for the purpose of my research.

There were advantages and disadvantages in the way the respondents were identified. One of the advantages was that the interviewees, who had information which matched exactly the purpose of my research, were identified within a short period of time due to the professor's nation-wide network of life experience writing teachers which was developed through decades of researching and activities in promoting the life experience writing movement.

The professor was well informed about the past and present educational practices and beliefs of life experience writing teachers.

Another advantage of having received help from the professor in choosing the respondents was that the accreditation of my research from the professor reduced apprehensions of the interviewees. Being referred to them by a professor with whom they were familiar assured to them that I share common educational beliefs with them, and that I am truly interested in conducting this interview. Such beliefs facilitated the process of establishing trustworthy partnerships between the interviewees and I, the interviewer, and allowed interviewees to provide some personal information requested during the interviews such as family background, childhood experiences, obstacles in schools, and political activities.

Although there were a number of advantages as they are described above, there were also some disadvantages in the way I intended to identify the respondents. One of the greatest disadvantage was that total control was given to the professor over the identification of the respondents. The professor's understanding of the researcher and the research would influence the identification of the respondents and consequently influence the information I could obtain from the interviewees.

After I had questioned carefully the legitimacy of giving over total control of this phase of research, I determined that there were more advantages than

disadvantages in letting the professor, who is an inside member of the group, choose the respondents. The purpose of the interview was to collect the experiences and reflections of the life experience writing educators under controlled education. My attempt was not to generalize the results of the research, but to reconstruct the experiences of the respondents through the detailed and rich descriptions the interviewees provide and to attempt to understand the deep meaning of their experiences. Therefore, it was not necessary to select samples from the population by controlling particular factors which might influence the generalization of the result. Instead, it was important to select interviewees who had rich experiences and insightful reflections in practicing life experience writing education. Also a strong educational stance and correspondence of it with their actual teaching practice was needed.

Within a week, I obtained the names of five life experience writing teachers from the professor and one of his graduate students. The graduate student offered to contact these prospective interviewees by telephone to implore them to participate in my research. She succeeded in contacting three of the five teachers and all indicated a willingness to take part in my research. After receiving this message, I sent a letter to these three teachers individually, briefly introducing myself (Appendix A). Japanese translations of the purpose of my research from Chapter 1 of this thesis and a written description of procedures of the interview were attached to the letter in order to help the

interviewees to have a clear idea of what the actual interview was going to be like. I contacted each of them by telephone after I sent the letters to confirm their participation in the interview and set the schedule for the first interviews. Meanwhile, I continued my attempt to get in touch with the fourth and fifth prospective interviewees.

However, after I had finished the first interviews with the three participants and transcribed them, I decided to cease attempting to contact the fourth and fifth prospective participants because I found the time and energy it took for one interview was tremendous. Each interview was a joint project with the respondents and me, which required a tremendous amount of communication not only during the interviews but also before and after the interviews. Each interview with the first three participants lasted as long as three hours, twice as long as I had originally planned. In addition, the questions and issues which needed further discussions and clarifications accumulated greatly through writing protocols. I wanted to spend my time talking to them and studying them more in depth. Therefore, I decided to limit the numbers of interviewees to three and study them more intensely rather than to extend the number of interviewees to five and interact with them superficially.

Data Collection

The method of data collection I chose was in-depth interviews. According to Erlandson et al. (1993), an interview is a "purposeful conversation" (p.86), conducted in order to deepen both the interviewer's and the interviewee's understanding of a certain phenomenon (Mishler, 1986). During the interviews, I, the interviewer, was not the only one who asks questions and interprets data. I made an effort to have dialogue with my interviewees so that I could reach an understanding of fundamentals of their experiences which made the experiences meaningful (Erlandson et al., 1993). Collaboration between interviewer and interviewee was essential for the success of the interview (Mishler, 1986, p. 96)..

I avoided to structure the interview too intensely based on an assumption that the interviewee's story itself was a highly constructed text (Casey, 1993). If I imposed my own structure of understanding by asking systematically organized questions, I would have broken the structure of meaning which had already been constructed in the interviewee's mind (Casey, 1993), hindering the understanding of the meaning of their experiences from their perspective.

Another reason why a rigid structuring of the interview was avoided was that I believed that researcher's understanding of the phenomena would change constantly and new questions must emerge asked as the conversation with the respondents develop. If I persisted in my original plan of a structured interview, I must have resulted in obtaining the information which seemed significant for me

but not for the interviewees. So, during the interview, I tried not to focus on following a list of specific questions, or asking the questions in exact wording in planned order. Instead, the I made efforts to develop the conversation naturally (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 90).

However, avoiding rigidly structured interviews did not mean that there was no structure at all in the interviews. I was aware that randomly asking any kind of open-ended questions depending on feelings would simply elicit great amounts of information irrelevant to the purpose of the study (van Manen, 1990). According to van Manen (1990), it is important that the researcher determine clearly what he/she wants to find out through the interview and ask questions relevant to the purpose of the study. Thus, I prepared several basic questions and issues needed to be covered during the interviews, although neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions were predetermined. During the interview, I referred to these basic questions and made certain that the conversation did not greatly deviate from these topics. The basic questions which was addressed in my interviews were:

1. What is life experience writing?
2. How did you come to start life experience writing?
3. How did the government's policy of seeking efficiency in education affect your school?
4. Did you experience any obstacles in practicing life

experience writing in the schools where you taught?

5. How did the life experience writing education affect your students?

Interviewing Procedure

Unfamiliarity with each other caused some uneasiness at the beginning of the interviews. I sent a letter to each of the interviewees with the intent of relaxing them by informing them of the purpose and procedure of the research, but it seemed to have the reverse effect. As soon as the interviewees read the letter, they called me to inquire about further details as to how the interviews would be conducted. Two interviewees had requested a list of all the questions which would be asked during the interview so that they could prepare answers. I responded that only sample questions could be prepared since the type of interview I was planning to conduct was not very structured in nature. In response to their unsatisfactory reaction, I said , "I would like to hear what you think is important rather than what I think is important." This left them frustrated and unsure.

Although I was hesitant to provide more questions prior to the interview, I prepared some more sample questions and mailed them, based on the assumption that increasing the comfort of the interviewees is crucial for a successful interview (Casey, 1993). I felt that if providing more information

serves them to prepare for the interview and made them feel more at ease, such an effort needed to be made. To avoid the possibility of allowing the interviews to be rigid with interviewees merely responding briefly to a list of questions, I made an effort to make questions as broad as possible. It was also my intention that these questions stimulate their thinking and help them to pull out memories from their earlier teaching practices.

In addition to sending more sample questions, what I did to solve the problem of unfamiliarity was to reveal myself to the interviewees. I sent the interviewees a translated version of the first chapter of this thesis which contained my personal experiences in education and my educational beliefs developed through those experiences. One of the interviewees was excited when he read the letter and responded rather quickly by phone. From the conversation, I felt that my stance in education and the intent of the research was very well understood and accepted.

The interviews were conducted in the interviewees' homes or at a coffee shop with which they were familiar. Choosing the site where the interviewees feel comfortable enabled us to create rather relaxed atmosphere in the interview. Casey (1993) states that establishing a less formal relationship between interviewer and interviewee is essential for successful data collection Therefore, I began the interviews with casual conversation. We first talked about each other's background and the purpose of the research. According to Casey (1993),

this conversation is important not only to resolve tension and practice speaking but also to establish a strong trustworthy relationship which will be a base for the conversation to take place in the subsequent interview. Casey (1993) further states that identifying "what we have in common" (p.18) is necessary for a dialogue to take place. By understanding the beliefs and passions motivating the researcher to conduct the study, the interviewee will be more likely to see the interviewer as an "insider" and provide necessary information willingly.

The conversations with three life experience writing teachers covered their life stories, spanning over sixty years. The interviews took a course which tended to shift abruptly from one era to another freely. Chronological order was not our focus during the interview, and one story triggered the relevant theme of another story. The interviewees apologized for not having talked in an organized manner. However, contrary to their concerns, the manner in which we conducted the interviews enabled us to successfully create a rich text, a text which has webs of meaning intertwined together constituting itself as a whole. This text was much better than a well-organized text with a list of superficial facts arranged in chronological order.

Sometimes, the interviewees and I were engaged in enthusiastic discussions about schools. At other times, I just assumed the role of listener, left speechless and unable to find any common ground on which to relate to the meaning of their experiences. The war time stories made me aware of the great

gap between today and the era of their adolescence, the gap between myself and them.

However, as my research was progressed in the course of writing protocols and reviewing them, the bridge connecting our two eras began to form. The interviews had connected the two eras, the time I have lived and the era before. They existed separately in my mind before the interview, but now I am able to see the past reflected in the present. The nature of the problems we have in controlled education today manifested itself more clearly as I saw it in relation to the past. My beliefs in conducting education for empowerment of the students by seeking the voices of students was affirmed as I heard the voices of the interviewees. It seemed that every interview I had was very personal. Not only was I connected to the respondents during the interview but they became someone special in my life, friends and mentors.

The entire interview was recorded on audio tape. During the interviews, I also took notes to assure that the desired topics were covered during the interview. After the first interview was completed, I wrote my impressions of the interview (Patten, 1980). I also transcribed the tape and wrote a summary of the interview and the questions which occurred through reviewing the first interview (van Manen 1990; Erlandson et al., 1993). The transcription of interviews was sent to the interviewees for checking so that any misinterpretations between the

interviewer and the interviewees could be prevented. The second interview was conducted by following the same procedures as the first.

Data Analysis

The data analysis is to "take construction gathered from the context and reconstruct them into a meaningful whole" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 116). The recorded conversations between the interviewee and the interviewer was transcribed. The teachers' comments and the researcher's interpretation of those comments gained through the interviews were categorized into two groups: teachers' lived experiences and teaching practices. The first category included information concerning the interviewees experiences preceding their teaching career and the second category covered their classroom teaching and interactions with students, parents, administrators and colleagues at school.

After the individual teacher's narratives were reconstructed and categorized, I examined each category to identify common themes of the teachers' experiences. Finding themes was necessary in understanding the teachers' experiences, since themes are like "knots in the webs or our experiences, around which certain lived experience are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes" (van Manen, 1990, p. 90).

A selected approach suggested by van Manen (1990) was used in identifying themes in this research. First, I read the transcribed conversations

with the interviewees, paying close attention to phrases and statements which stand out. Then, I underlined the descriptions which seemed particularly essential or revealing about the experience being described. After I went through the whole transcribed conversation, I read the underlined descriptions carefully and write brief captions, which appropriately represent the meaning of the essential themes on the side of each description. Then I identified the common themes among various descriptions and categorize the descriptions based on the themes.

The next step in data analysis was linguistic transformation. According to van Manen (1990), linguistic transformation is a "creative and hermeneutic process" of transforming the transcribed texts into "more phenomenologically sensitive paragraphs" (p. 96). In the process of linguistic transformation, I read descriptions of certain themes and examined the nature and characteristics underlying the descriptions of actual educational experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Stories of Three Life Experience Writing Teachers

The life experience writing teachers I interviewed are Kitano, Fujita, and Yamamoto. Kitano and Fujita taught in junior high schools and Yamamoto taught in elementary school. They have recently retired from teaching after having served for public schools for approximately forty years. Their dramatic experiences as young students during World War II and as teachers under a system of expanding controlled education in post World War II regime in Japan present rich texts through which we can reflect on our own teaching and discover essences of teaching.

Kitano's Story

Kitano taught Japanese for 34 years from 1954 to 1988 in junior high schools. His teaching career started in Tokyo, and mostly took place in Chiba, a prefecture which is located near Tokyo, known for its bay industrial area developed during the economic expansion of the 1960s. He began practicing life experience writing as soon as he became a teacher. Kitano, who is a founder of the Chiba Composition Association, has been an active leader of writing

education in the region and numbers of public school teachers have learned the tradition of life experience writing by sharing their experiences in the study groups Kitano organizes.

"The origin of my life experience writing education lies in poverty," Kitano states. Kitano was born in a farming family in Kagoshima, the very south end of Japan. The poor financial state of the family forced him and eleven brothers and sisters to live meagerly. Poverty did not allow Kitano to proceed to junior high school, regardless of the fact that he had great enthusiasm for academics from an early age.

Having no option to pursue his academic ambitions, Kitano chose to attend the Air Force Academy. His first try at entering the academy failed, because a spot on a lung was found in a X-ray during the entrance examination. He was admitted to the program on his second attempt. In the year he entered the academy, 1944, Japan was on the verge of defeat. The pilot training program did not have a single plane for practice, and very soon, before he even touched an airplane, the war ended. Now he looks back at the past and realizes the great luck he had. "Most of my friends who took the first entrance exam with me became *kamikaze pilots* after receiving some training at the pilot academy. Of course, none of them ever came back. I was this close to death." Kitano states.

August 15th, 1945 the officer called the students together and announced that Japan had been defeated in the war. Kitano, who was seventeen at that

time, stated that he felt nothing when he heard the news. The existence of an emperor who was the major focus of his life during the war as well as the focus of all the rest of the common citizens in Japan, left his mind from that day on. Kitano's main focus in life shifted from serving the emperor to his own survival. Japan had diminished all of its resources and manpower during the war, so literally nothing was left in the country when the war ended. Under these severe circumstances, Kitano became a railroad construction worker. However, his childhood desire to study was still strong in his mind. He religiously took a high school textbook to work. At the construction site, he would find a quiet place and read the book carefully during his breaks. Kitano's strong motivation and industriousness had led him to Tokyo to pursue his goal of attending college. In Tokyo, he passed an exam to certifying him with a high school diploma, and soon he was admitted to Nihon University.

The difficulties of his financial status had made him decide to be a teacher upon graduation. Teaching in public schools seemed to give stability to his life, since at least he would never need to worry about bread on the table if he became a teacher. That was the kind of job he wanted to have. He started to teach the Japanese language in a junior high school in Tokyo. Soon, he joined a study group organized by young teachers in which he learned Marxist economic theory. It was the first time in his life that he was exposed to Marxist theory, and it was an eye opening experience which allowed him to develop a critical attitude

toward the society. As he learned Marxist economic theory, he came to understand his personal history, how poor he was and why he was so poor.

In Kitano's practice of teaching he encouraged his students to examine the reality of life insightfully and identify the contradictions of existing social structures. In the junior high school where he taught during the 1970s and 1980s, he had passionately appealed to the students to look at the changes in their lives brought about by industrialization and to think of the meaning of the changes. The Chiba area where Kitano taught was under the influence of the Tokyo bay area developmental project, which had reclaimed the ocean and rivers to build a huge plant. The fisherman in that area had lost jobs and their culture, which had been transmitted from generation to generation in that area. They had to adjust to a new life. In addition, citizens' everyday lives were polluted by the waste and smoke from the industrial plants.

Kitano also had persistently taught the students not to tolerate any form of discriminations. He was compassionate toward the oppressed and was very adamant about any kind of discrimination against a weak person. In the 1970s and the 1980s, one of the problems teachers had to face in the classrooms was bullying. Kitano aggressively articulated the problem of discrimination in the class and encouraged his students to talk about it with the intention of letting them realize the malignancy of discrimination. "What is wrong with being poor? Is this something to be ridiculed?" The enraged comment he wrote in the class diary

demonstrates his hatred of discrimination and anger toward the attitude of a human beings who lack care and respect for the existence of others. He believes that human beings are born equal and no matter what circumstances one was born in, one is free and one can live subjectively based on his/her own choices. This thought must have been developed by the difficulties he had experienced during his youth in poverty and war.

Kitano faced children who had been outcast from the highly controlled systems of economic development. These children had lost their trust of parents, friends, teachers and themselves. Many of them ran with delinquents. Kitano viewed society from these students' vantage point. He had tried to find out the words, the genuine words, which were suppressed within his students so that they could fully express their thoughts and feelings and share them with other children.

Fujita's Story

Fujita taught Japanese for forty years from 1952 to 1992 in junior high schools in her home town, Fukushima. Her interest in life experience writing education was ignited and developed while she was in Teachers' College by associating with Kokubun and Mụchaku, who were active promoters of life experience writing education (Tsurumi, 1995). During her forty year teaching career, Fujita worked closely with public school teachers and university professors throughout Japan to share her classroom experiences and insights in

order to contribute to the field of writing education. In addition to her excellence in writing education, Fujita has been known as an active leader in the region who promotes students' rights and freedoms in schools.

Fujita was born in 1931 in Fukushima prefecture, the northeast region of Japan. Her memories of adolescence are completely tainted by the color of the war. Japan was in the middle of a severe battle when she entered girls' high school. At school, academic work was seldom conducted. Instead, farming, factory labor and military training occupied the major part of her school life. When she was a junior in high school, she was sent to a weapon producing factory in Yokosuka with her classmates for service labor.

As she described herself, she was the model student during high school. She pledged loyalty to the country and performed the assigned task perfectly without any complaint to authorities. Being a model student in the totalitarian environment meant the complete suppression of her voice: she silently overlooked scenes of Korean workers being abused by Japanese soldiers. She hid her fear during the frequent air raid attacks, and she silently fought her hunger caused by the extreme shortage of food. She refused to see, hear, say, and feel unless she was ordered to do so. In this extremely restricted life, she, who played the role of a model student, seemed to be well adjusted to the system. Fujita stated that she never hated militarism during that time, nor did she doubt the falseness of militarism.

After she had graduated from a girls' high school in her hometown of Fukushima, she moved to Tokyo to attend a women's teachers' college to study home economics education. The life of " the model student" changed drastically upon viewing the disastrous scenes in Tokyo. Tokyo was burned to ashes, covered with poverty and starvation. Women who had been engrossed in practicing to kill the enemy with a spearhead during the war were forced in prostitution for survival. Children clustered around American soldiers and fought over little pieces of chocolate and gum which the soldiers threw out to the kids for fun.

Such scenes promoted Fujita to question what society is. She rigorously studied Marx and Hegel, and also participated in student activities. Through these activities, she came to realize the meaning of her oppressive experiences during the war and the remaining system of oppression in Japanese society. Such awareness caused anger within her. Fujita states, "My ego exploded since it has been suppressed so long." She continues, "My body and mind were filled up with energy. I could not suppress my need to express my dissatisfaction and do something about this society. There was no way I could just sit in the classroom and listen to those old professors who were trapped by traditional values."

What Fujita had done through her student activism was to protect individuals' rights and freedoms as our constitution guarantees. Therefore, her

action was neither undemocratic nor unconstitutional. However, when communism became a threat to the Japanese as the Korean War started in 1950, the Japanese government started to restrict freedom of speech. What seemed to be promotion of democracy, was labeled communist. Fujita, who conducted activities for promoting democracy was targeted as communist and purged. Along with many other classmates who were actively involved in student activities, she was restricted from any job offers for half a year after she graduated from college, although teachers, especially the trained ones were in extreme shortage in those days. Luckily, a principal who favored Dewey's progressive education heard about Fujita and talked the board of education into allowing her to work in a junior high school.

Fujita states that life experience writing is to look at the realities of one's life closely and to generate ideas based on the information gained from one's own observation of reality. Throughout her teaching career, under controlled education, she never attempted to impose knowledge on her students. Fujita instead tried to draw out knowledge which had been constructed through their life experiences and helped them to synthesize such knowledge in an academic way. The students often told her, "You know what? In your class, even students who are most unlikely to receive compliments from other teachers are praised a lot." This statement supports the fact that Fujita's attitude provided confidence to

the students and gave validation to their knowledge derived from their life experiences.

Under controlled education, Fujita's educational beliefs and practices often deviated from the norm, but she persistently continued to teach based on her strong beliefs. Unlike other teachers, she did not feel the pressure of having to successfully send a greater number of students to better high schools. She had never focused on raising students' test scores through drilling and test taking skills. Instead, she guided students to acquire authentic knowledge derived from life experiences and the ability to think critically and independently.

In controlled education which places focus on the transmission of knowledge and values which were validated by authority and the promotion of a submissive attitude among students, teachers were forced to play the role of gatekeeper or indoctrinator, but Fujita silently refused such a role. She could never stand in front of the students as a representative of the authority. She instead, took off her mask of teacher and stood beside the students to listen to their suppressed voices.

Through her strong and persistent beliefs and her role in validating each individual's knowledge derived from experiences. I see her empathy for the oppressed who were forced to live in an inhumane way. Such empathy is derived from her anger toward herself and the society which allowed such things

to happen during the war. She is strongly determined never to allow such great mistakes to take place in this world again.

Yamamoto's Story

Yamamoto's teaching career started in 1951 in his hometown Niigata. During the summer of 1952, his second year of teaching, Yamamoto attended the first conference of life experience writing in Nakatsugawa. At the conference, he was struck by Kazuko Tusrumi's speech on establishing coalitions without inhibiting the development of the individual self. He determined to practice education which promotes students' individuality as well as coalitions in the class based on empathy. Since 1952 to the present, for over forty years, Yamamoto has been one of the most active promoters of life experience writing education in Japan. He organized composition groups for elementary school teachers in Niigata and in Tokyo. In addition, he has served as editor of the monthly journal *Composition and Education*, which provides current information on both theoretical and practical studies of life experience writing education.

As well as Fujita and Kitano, Yamamto's educational beliefs and practice of life experience writing is closely related to his experiences during the war. Yamamoto, who was taught to be an elite military officer both by his parents and by his teachers since he was a child, rigorously studied and exercised with his great dream of becoming a soldier and dying for the country without any hesitation. Yamamoto never questioned the possibility of Japan's defeat in the

war. All the sacrifices he and his family made due to the war were accepted. Even his brother's death in the war in 1944 was understood as a necessary sacrifice the family had to make for the prosperity of the nation and its achievement of the goal which was established a glorious continent under the name of the emperor. However, Yamamoto's life faced drastic changes in August 1945 as the war ended.

A scene of the day Japan surrendered in the war still remains clear in Yamamoto's memory. A strong smell of incense and his father's tears for having lost his son (Yamamoto's elder brother) for nothing. Acceptance of Japan's surrender soon led Yamamoto to realize that the god to whom he was willing to sacrifice his life denounced his status and claimed to merely be a human being. The Kamikaze, god wind, which was supposed to protect the nation was merely a legend. The war was not sacred, and his own brother's death was meaningless. His strong dream of becoming an elite military officer was a lie, making him feel empty.

Nothing could fill the void. Nothing sounded real to this desperate and confused boy. Even democracy did not excite him. The only thing which was real in his mind was his anger. Especially strong anger toward the education which had deceived him was ignited within his mind, and is described in his promise to himself , "I am not going to let anyone manipulate or deceive me again. I am going to think with my own brain." However, not knowing where and how to

direct his anger, Yamamoto started to lead a life without purpose. The model student whose prospective life was the elite officer came to lead a degenerative life characterized by keeping the company of delinquents and neglecting his academic responsibilities.

Yamamoto proceeded to a teacher training college in Niigata and received a teaching certification in 1951. "Becoming a teacher was the last thing I wanted to do," Yamamoto states. He originally wanted to go to Tokyo and study business, but his mother's strong begging forced him to become a teacher. Yamamoto often wondered why he became a teacher and felt dissatisfaction and unreasonable anger within himself. However, an encounter with a student during his first year of teaching made him realize the calling of teaching, when a composition she wrote on her father's death in the war made him realize her deep wounds from the war. When Yamamoto realized that "her pain is my pain" he realized that he was meant to become a teacher to embrace the pain of these children and protect them from an education which intend to manipulate them. Learning from the tradition of life experience writing education, he came to believe writing should be the core of education. Through writing, students obtained skills to think autonomously and critically. By sharing writings, a coalition in the class based on empathy was promoted.

During the late 1950s to early 1960s, Yamamoto was not only active in the class in promoting the education of his beliefs but also extended his

educational activities outside school. As a member of the teachers' union, he severely criticized the expanding controlled education and also pleaded the importance of promoting students' liberation through writing education. Yamamoto interacted with factory workers for coalitions on the fight of protecting the freedoms and rights of teachers. He was literally involved with education day and night. It seems that the anger toward the education which deceived him during the war had exploded and urged him to passionately pursue and fight for the achievement of his ideal education, education for self-actualization and liberation.

Although his radical activities as a member of the teachers' union ceased as they faced defeat in all the major educational conflicts such as implementation of teacher evaluation policies, moral education, national standardized testing, and regulations on selection of textbooks, Yamamoto's contribution and devotion to education continued. Yamamoto, who learned transformation of education is possible not through criticisms but by demonstrating quality education which would convince authorities, once again rigorously studied writing education. Implementation of new ideas in the classrooms were carefully reflected upon and often shared at conferences and through publications. In addition, Yamamoto organized teachers' study groups in Machida city, and he has annually published collections of student compositions, whose sales increased to 24,000 volumes.

For Yamamoto the purpose of education is to assist the students' process of self actualization as well as to establish a strong and genuine coalition among students. Yamamoto believes that children have unique experiences, abilities, personalities and perspectives which lead them to feel and interpret phenomena in unique ways. Yamamoto enthusiastically works with his students to let them discover their own uniqueness. Acknowledging individual uniqueness is important for students because it validates their existence and provides the energy and courage for them to be independent thinkers. Sharing such uniqueness is stressed in Yamamoto's class, broadening their perspectives and teaching students to care compassionately about others. Development of self and coalition in the group cannot be separated in Yamamoto's mind. A strong connection among students made possible by empathy allows an environment where students can look into oneself honestly and to develop a genuine dialogue in the class.

In Yamamoto's practice I sense a strong love for children, a passion for drawing out their potential, and a strong determination to construct a genuinely democratic society in which every individual member's voice is heard.

Themes of Live Experiences

The three interviewees lived through a great turmoil caused by World War II as adolescents. Their experiences related to the war greatly influenced the

development of their personal and educational beliefs in subsequent years. This section consists of two part: Silence and Finding One's Voice.

Silence

The story begins with silence. It is the story of the war. The story of the oppression. The three interviewees were all born in Japan in the early 1930s, the era of diminishing freedoms and expanding dehumanization, during which terror existed as the military government expanded massively for the purpose of recovering the economy through military power. Invasion of other nations in Asia was glorified and the restriction of freedom for individuals was justified in the name of the emperor, the living god. The Japanese government initiated the invasion of China in 1931. Ten years later, the Pacific War started. The ravages of war touched all and everything was burned to ashes: land, houses, schools, families, lives and memories etc..

School existed to raise citizens' consciousness to fully support the policy of totalitarianism and to contribute to victory in the war by sacrificing one's humanity. The myth of the emperor was implemented in education as the basis of indoctrinating citizens from an early age. The students were taught to be completely loyal to the emperor. Often times, it meant sacrificing one's life for the nation.

How each interviewee faced the end of the war in August 1945, symbolizes their youth which had been baffled by the myth of the emperor and

the turmoil created by Japan's false ambitions to conquer the world. Kitano at the age of seventeen was in the Kamikaze pilot training program at Kyushu. Fujita was in a weapons producing factory in Yokosuka with her classmates serving their assigned labors by command of the Navy. Yamamoto was in junior high school in his home town, Niigata, rigorously participating in military training to enter an officer training program the following year.

Contrary to my assumption, extreme anger nor experiences of intolerable hardships during the war were expressed by the interviewees. Although they currently hold critical positions toward the education they received under militarism, they, in those days, had accepted the life which seemed obviously inhumane, undemocratic and even immoral, without opposition. They were under constant oppression which paralyzed their senses, allowing them to feel no pain of oppressive experiences. "How could I have known that something was painful if I did not know anything better?" Fujita responded to me when I asked her if she didn't seek escape from the reality of that time. As they were taught in schools, they believed in the power of the emperor, the living god, and entrusted their lives into his hands. Similarly, militarism and totalitarianism were not negative to them, but just part of the normal daily scene. There was no way they could articulate a fraud in their lives during the war period, because the information citizens could obtain was totally controlled by the government. The judgment one

made about the government based on the limited information available to them was of course favorable to the government.

Education played a significant role in keeping critical citizens away from the information which conflicted with the goals of the nation. Because of their education, they believed the prosperity of Japan was a viable goal and the military invasion of other Asian nations was definitely justified. The myth which asserted superiority of the Japanese and the absolute power of the emperor developed the attitude among the students of eagerly cooperating in achieving the nation's goals. How could these students, the product of military education, have developed critical attitudes toward the government, or even have possessed their own values by which to judge the health of the government?

The myth and propaganda penetrated the young flexible minds of these interviewees. The existence of "Self" and the purpose of one' life was not in the hands of individuals but in the hands of the nation. They were to live to achieve the goals of the nation, to profit the nation, and the greatest and the most honorary contribution one could make was to die for the nation. Kitano states,

> In those days, I committed myself to studying hard and training my body for the emperor. To become a good soldier and to serve the emperor was the absolute goal I had in my mind. I knew that when I became twenty years old, I would take a physical examination for conscription, join the military and die for the emperor. It was the greatest picture I could draw

> in my mind . It was what I dreamed about. I never thought about becoming a teacher in those days. Being a military officer was much more prestigious.

The fighting spirit was ignited and promoted throughout education from the day the students entered school. Yamamoto remembers his school days:

> The first line in our elementary school reading text book was "Go forward, go forward soldiers." Reading textbooks were filled with the stories of war heroes; the most famous one I remember is the bugler Kinoshita who was found dead after the battle with his bugle still pressed firmly against his mouth. We also often wrote consolation letters to soldiers in the battlefield in Manchuria. I guess everything was dyed in the color of war, but it was normal then.

The war period is the time during which the normal is turned into abnormal and abnormal is transformed to normal. Secret rituals regularly conducted in communities and schools were essential in implementing the deification of the emperor in children's minds and enforcing obedience to his words. Kitano remembers the morning ceremonies in elementary school of his home town, Kagoshima:

> A solemn atmosphere covered the entire school on the day of the ceremony. The principal wore a black formal tuxedo and white gloves on his hands. He respectfully read the "Imperial Rescript on Education."

> While he read the rescripit aloud, the students had to keep their head deeply down and listen quietly for what seemed an eternity. We also saluted toward the northeastern sky , the direction in which the emperor's palace was located.

The sublimity created in that environment heightened the meaning of the existence of god, the super power, and made them feel honored to be his followers. In addition to the entire education system which embedded into children's minds the idea of serving the emperor as a virtue, the hierarchical society which did not allow social up-ward mobility triggered many ambitious youths' desire to be successful by serving the emperor. Kitano states:

> When I was in the sixth grade, students who planned to proceed to junior high school stayed after school to receive special tutoring sessions to prepare themselves for the entrance examination. I was jealous of them. I was also humiliated, because I knew that I was smarter than they were. I did not know why I could not be the one to go to junior high school, so I went back home and told my father immediately that I want to go to junior high school. He responded to me in one sentence, "I got no money." The moment I heard that , I realized the situation. We were poor farmers, with a family of eleven children. Sending one of us to school was beyond his financial capability. However, my desire to study was so strong. There was only one way to pursue my dream. It was to go

to military training school. The academic curriculum in military school was the same as that of the regular academic high schools. In addition they provided room, food, and clothing while the students were in school, so I did not have to place any financial burden on my parents. Of course the possibility of death emerged in my head when I seriously considered going to pilot training school, but I did not think about it very much.

Hamaguchi and Kumon(1985) states that the military in Japan has contributed to resolving the dissatisfaction of the working class because the hierarchy established within the military did not coincide with the hierarchy of the society in general. In Japanese society before World War II, social status and family status were rigidly established so that mobility within the structure was extremely limited. As indicated by Kitano's experience, those who were born into the family of a tenant farmer could not afford to receive the education necessary to obtain occupations which would increase their annual incomes. As a result of a deficient education, they had no choice but to fill the position of the tenant farmer. They were placed in a bad cycle in which their abilities and efforts were never reflected appropriately in the share of the wealth.

However, in the military the opportunities for upward mobility were prevalent. The skills, intelligence and loyalty one demonstrated to the military were reflected in one's rank. Therefore, for example, a soldier from a tenant farm family could be promoted in the military and have a subordinate who was

a college graduate from the landlord class. The military was the only place where young males from the working class could become elites of the nation. The public interpreted it as equality protected in the name of the emperor, and the military was seen as the most democratic organization in Japan (Hamaguchi and Kumon, 1985). One English officer who taught at a Naval academy in Japan also expressed his amazement toward the openness of the military school to the various classes (Hamaguchi and Kumon, 1985).

This "democratic institution" attracted many young Japanese. I believe that resolving dissatisfactions of the working class by providing the opportunity of upward mobility in the military has prevented many from becoming aware of unfair class structures which exist in society, or further to examine the genuine cause of the fairness. Questions such as "Why is wealth not distributed fairly?," "Who is profiting in this system?," "Why are one's abilities and efforts not genuinely related to the success in their lives?," or "Why do we have class structures?," were not asked. It was normal that many young males from the working class assumed that the military was a great place because it gave them the opportunity to study and be successful. However that covered up the unfair structures which exist in the world and prevented them from identifying the real cause of their dissatisfactions. As stated in Kitano's story, the ambitions of young males from the working class and the worship of the emperor were combined to agitate them into becoming extreme patriotic and militaristic.

The absolute belief in the emperor being god and the protector of the nation turned the ordinary into extraordinary and transformed extraordinary into ordinary. The ordinal daily events which normally occupy one's mind or common topics of conversation such as quarrels with friends, lunch menus in the cafeteria, or tomorrow's weather, all became insignificant and worthless. Such indifference to their own lives and the lack of reflection on their own experiences in their daily lives led them to suppress their emotions, creativity and thought, and finally forbade them to be the subjects of their own lives. Fujita, who was sent to a weapon producing factory in Yokosuka during the war, looks back on these days and says:

> Of course the life was rigid and suffocating, but there was nothing I could do about it. I had to tolerate it. That's all. My life was filled with tolerances, nothing but tolerance. Many times I thought that I could no longer endure, but I knew that I would find no place to go, no food to eat after I ran away from the factory. I had to stay where I was told to stay and do what I was told to do. There were no other options. So, I decided to believe that this is the life. After a while, I could no longer remember or dream about the ordinary life. At the factory, we made small boats in which only one sailor and one bomb fit. Many young boys from my home town who were about the same age as I was, got in the boat and attacked warships by crashing into them with a bomb. Of course, most of them did

> not return. But I did not think about the consequences of what I was doing, making weapons, in those days. I never realized that what I did in the factory killed many people, including my friends. I didn't think about those things until the war ended.

To survive in the totally controlled environment, she killed her emotions, so she could not feel her pain. She killed her thoughts, so she could not question. She accepted everything that happened in her life and dealt with it. When she was not allowed to escape from the reality, the only thing she could do was to shut herself off from the reality. She had made an attempt to become totally obedient to the country with no emotion and conducted the duties assigned to her. Time passed without her expressing genuine feelings.

When one suppresses and kills one's feelings, one is no longer oneself. When one represses thinking, one is no longer a human. He/she turns out to be merely flesh existing separately from his/her soul. During the war, even the physical body did not belong to individuals. It was to be used for the prosperity of the nation, and abandoned with one command. Fujita did not have the tools to express nor to feel emotions most of the time. Under the totalitarian society, expressing emotions and opinions of individuals was totally deviant. It actually meant risking one's life. Although the subtle light of humanity and sympathy was not totally extinguished by the regime, she had to hide such sympathy within herself and let it secretly light her heart.

Fujita states:

> I did not hate the war at that time. I just took it for granted, but there were some occasions when I felt truly sorry. I saw Korean workers being abused by the Japanese soldiers frequently. The soldiers grabbed the Korean workers' necks and banged their heads on the door many times, slapping and kicking them repeatedly. My heart felt pain when I saw the scene. The Koreans were forced to do the most dangerous labor such as constructing air raid shelters by digging into a mountain. Many Koreans died during the constructions from severe labor, violence and accidents. Many times their dead bodies were many times thrown out on the street and left there to rot. Although I did not know anything about the history of Korea nor its relationship with Japan at that time, I felt terribly sorry.

Japan surrendered unconditionally on August 15th, 1945. How did the citizens whose minds were filled with loyalty toward the emperor accept the ending of the war? How did they accept the fact that the emperor suddenly ceased being a god, and militarism fading on August 15th? From that day, all the values implanted into the minds of many Japanese were denied. The value systems and beliefs which supported the people were instantly taken away with nothing left behind to replace them. They were left with nothing. Kitano states, "The moment I heard that we were defeated in war, the existence of the emperor slipped away from my mind naturally. I was only seventeen years old. I was

young, with a very flexible mind. I felt a little bit strange about this sudden change." Yamamoto also states, 'Democracy' did not seem something impressively great at that time. It was merely seen as the ways of 'the victorious nation' America." He continues, "I had been brought up without any taste of freedom until I became fifteen years old. How can you expect me to awaken to liberalism in one day?"

Finding One's Voice

During the war, these interviewees were silenced. The very natural desires and needs they possess as human beings; the desire to survive, to love others, to appreciate the beauty of the world and to be compassionate toward others, were pressed down to the very bottom of their heart and were never allowed to surface. These desires were not recognized for a while. The first emotion which emerged in the interviewees' minds was that of anger. Anger was brought to them through confusion accompanied by the sudden changes and difficulties in society following the defeat in the war. Yamamoto describes his disparity as a "who gives a damn attitude:"

> My elder friends who had gone to military schools came back. They all appeared lethergetic; they just hung around on the streets, spent day after day without any purpose. I identified myself with them. I was also once an ambitious military Japanese boy who devoted my life to the victory of the war. I lost that glorious goal, and was left with nothing. I

started to hang around with them. I was only fifteen years old then, but I started to smoke, wore long hair, and missed classes frequently. I just watched movies and read books. My friends were crazy about Marx in those days, but I didn't pay attention to that either. My mother cried and begged me to change, but I did not until my very last year of college.

The nature of Yamamoto's anger which filled his mind subsequently after the war was rooted in his feeling of having been deceived. It seemed that the world had changed abruptly after the defeat of the war. Before, the military forced citizens to pledge loyalty to the nation and urged them to fight for the nation. As a matter of fact , Yamamoto's own brother was killed in a battle in the Philippines. But now, even his brother's death appeared to have lost its meaning. Dying for the emperor, which had been taught as being an absolutely honorable deed, was suddenly turned into a foolish and evil deed as the war ended. Yamamoto was angry about the change, yet unsure at whom to direct his anger. He did not understand how the world had changed and did not understand whether the change was good or bad. To the eyes of this outraged boy, even democracy which had been introduced to the citizens of Japan after the war seemed fake. Democracy was merely an "American" way and he could not sympathize with its ideas immediately nor accept it blindly. Doing this was exactly the same as following the emperor's words during the war. The only

definite feeling which emerged within his mind was that he could no longer depend on anyone anymore. Yamamoto states:

> I strongly felt that I would never allow anyone to deceive me again. I decided that I would only trust my eyes, and intelligence . I would feel things with my own senses and think with my own brain in making decisions on how I should live.

Anger and confusion accompanied the sudden changes that took place in Japan after the defeat of the war, promoting a sense of independence, critical attitude and the emergence of the self for the first time in these three interviewees who were educated in the military era. This critical attitude, developed during this period of time, became a base for their educational practices in later years. They came to value their own voices and started to pay more sensitive attention. Later such an attitude developed further into valuing and listening to others' voices, especially the voices of those who are being oppressed.

The awakening took place gradually, as they directly faced the hardships in post-war Japan where extreme shortages of housing and food were rampant. Reality constructed through direct observation of their life experiences revealed contradictions. Fujita states that the release of pressure from the confusion and anger gradually took place as she faced difficulties in everyday life as a college student in Tokyo. By participating in student activism, trying to identify the cause

of the problems and seeking to correct the disrupted system, she came to find her voice and at the same time developed a democratic attitude. Fujita remembers:

> The year after the war ended, I entered a women's teacher's college in Tokyo. I was so excited. However, the moment I arrived in Tokyo, all the fantasies and dreams I developed about college life faded away. Tokyo was burned to ashes. I could hardly identify which way was west and which way was east. In that burned city, we suffered an extreme shortage of food. A bowl of soup filled with radishes and a few pieces of rice floating in it was the only thing served in the dorm. It was never enough to fulfill our appetites, so we always had to go to the underground market and buy potatoes for 10-yen to satisfy our hunger. Starvation increased robbery both inside and outside of the school. Life was hard.
>
> However, what made my life much worse was the fact that the classes at the university were so weary. My professors were very traditional females who had taught in the same university for many years before the war. So, although the new government had passionately talked about propagating democratic education at that time, the education they practiced was the same as the pre-war undemocratic education for women. Even in economic class, we studied the way to efficiently utilize the income brought home by husbands. I just rebelled against those

teachers in the class. Outside of class, I became an active member of a student government association. We organized student demonstrations demanding more supplies of rice, relaxing some regulations in the dormitory, and improving the content of university courses.

One time I got in an argument with my professor in child development class. In the class, we went to a kindergarten to observe kindergarten students., and I became infuriated, because I saw luxurious black cars parked in front of the kindergarten. I could not believe that these rich kindergarten kids were chauffeur-driven to school every morning. It was 1948 when we were all suffering from the lack of rice. I confronted my teachers with the fact that the children we were advised to observe were children from a special class and observing them would not help us learn about the actual circumstances of average children in Japan. After this argument, the teacher had to change our class observation site to one nursery school in Itabashi where communities of blue collar workers were located.

Pain , suspicion, curiosity, and humanity, feelings which Fujita had suppressed started to ascend. She broke her silence, but was not quite sure of how to deal with her new feelings, so the energy which had been suppressed during the years of her oppressive experiences was entangled, trapped within her and boiling. "I had been repressed while I was in school. So when I

graduated from high school, all the anger I held within me had to explode." Fujita states.

Due to the fact that she had been exposed to theories of Marx through discussions with other students in college who had participated in student activities, she developed a new perspective on history and on current society. Her new perspective revealed existing social problems, such as economic gaps between classes, the disregarding of the rights of women, and the persisting prevalence of traditional teacher education as a means to dominate citizens. Studying Marx systematically also allowed her to perceive a social structure which persistently existed from the pre-war period. The structure ignored the voice of the common citizens and exploited them.

The awareness of hegemony triggered her suppressed humiliations, withheld during the war. Fujita was determined to stand on the side of the oppressed and actively demanded corrections in the systems which threatened the basic human rights of those who being oppressed. Fujita never used the term "communism" nor "democracy" in describing the political activities she conducted as a student. What she practiced was encouragement of the participation of common citizens in politics because she wanted to let the voices of the oppressed be heard. I believe the idea which provided the passion and support for her political activity was the humanity which has always rested in her heart and her empathy toward the people, the same kind of feeling as the

sorrow she had felt when she witnessed the Korean workers being abused by Japanese during the war. This empathy was developed and brought into her teaching practices as a base in the following years.

Themes of Teaching

As the three life experience writing teachers began teaching, beliefs firmly rooted in the reflection of their silence and anger from adolescence began to manifest. Through the of study of their teaching practices under expanding control over education from the early 1950s to the beginning of the 1990s, major four themes of teaching were identified. They are Empathy, Focusing on Life Experiences, Revealing Oneself, and Drawing out From the Students.

Empathy

Empathy Toward Students

I started my teaching career at a junior high school in down town Tokyo. I taught eighth grade Japanese there. In one of the classes I taught, there was a boy whose name was Kenichi. He was so tiny and pale which gave me the impression he was sick.

As customary in the first semester in public school, I visited my students' homes and had conferences with their parents. The home Kenichi took me to was not actually a home. It was an orphanage. I

visited with the aged female orphanage director, who told me that Kenichi was brought to the orphanage when he was only a few months old, and he had been in the institution ever since. The encounter with this boy who was burdened with sorrows on the inside made me decide that I would be a teacher and dedicate my life to these children.

The voice of the child was the voice of Kitano which he had kept in silence within himself in his adolescence. Encountering this familiar voice evoked Kitano's empathy toward the child and awakened Kitano. The society was filled with numerous contradictions, and those who suffer most are the ones who are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. When Kitano saw the child in a vulnerable position in society, he was determined to be with the child to embrace his pain as well as to encourage him. This decision matches van Manen's description of a teacher's vocation as a calling. van Manen (1991) states, "When I experience the potential weakness and vulnerability of others, the existence of others does not manifest itself merely as pity or compassion for the hurt, more, I experience the other as a voice, as an appeal to me and this is what we mean when we speak of living with children as a vocation 'calling"' (p.141).

Yamamoto also realized his calling to be a teacher through an encounter with a student with whom he empathized. Yamamoto remembers:

I became an elementary school teacher in my hometown and started to teach the third grade class. In the class, there was a girl who

stayed on my mind so impressively. Her name was Yoshiko. Yoshiko always seemed pale and never expressed herself to her classmates. She was the type of student who was extremely quiet but worked diligently. Thoughts constantly grew within me. "Why is she so lethargic?" "What is the cause of her passivity?" There was not a single day when I did not think about her. One day in April, she wrote an essay in the writing class. The composition was about her father who had died in the war (Appendix B).

Later, the essay won a prize in a writing contest, and I visited her house to congratulate her. The grandmother talked to me about Yoshiko's circumstances with tears running down her cheeks. Yoshiko's father died in a battle of the Philippines. I could relate myself to the sorrows of Yoshiko because I had lost my dearest brother in the same battle. I remembered a line Yoshiko wrote in her composition, "Whenever I look at his picture, I cannot help but wish that my father were alive. I hate the war which killed my father" (Appendix B). When I read the essay again, I felt her pain acutely, and the sorrow which I had kept secretly within myself for a long time became apparent to me. Awareness of my own sorrow also made me realized that Yoshiko's suffering was my suffering. I also have noticed that this suffering was also related to the reason I became a teacher. I became a teacher to fulfill the place of my brother who died in

> the war. To be honest with you, I hated being a teacher until then. However, when I read Yoshiko's writing, I felt some changes in my attitude toward teaching. I started to think that every child had sorrow and sufferings inside. Thus, I should stand on the side of them to hold their sorrow and pains.

By encountering this student, Yamamoto finally broke the wall of sorrows built around him and released the pain bottled within him. Such pain was the source of energy which prompted him to develop a sense of independence and establish a critical attitude toward the society during his outraged period in high school and college. Although this anger was necessary in helping him abandon the militarism embedded within himself, the anger caused him to turn inward and withdraw from society. In other words, his focus was totally on himself. However, the discovery of the same sorrows within a child transformed the direction of the energy accumulated in him. The shared pains revealed existing ties between himself and others. Such experiences of empathy were essential incidents in his teaching career, since they allowed him to overcome his self- centeredness, and to shift his focus to others. Yamamoto's determination to embrace the sorrow of the child became the base of unity and the active practice of life experience writing in the following years. Yamamoto states that empathy still plays a prominent role in his teaching practices in the 1990s.

Empathy Among Students

The beginning of Kitano and Yamamoto's teaching careers were marked by their empathy toward a particular student. Gradually the circle of empathy expanded to include more students. Furthermore, empathy developed among the students themselves. Yamamoto states:

> The sixth grade class I taught had rowdy, disobedient children. Their parents were all quite concerned about it and asked me to help in rehabilitating the children's attitudes. As I explored ideas of how I should do it, I came across a poem in our reading textbook which seemed perfect for this issue. The poem is:
>
> My mother is a flower blooming in my heart.
> The most pure and beautiful of the shiny creatures on the earth
> and in the sky is a mother's love.
> Your spirit will battle with any obstacles to protect us.
> Your ears do not miss any subtle cry of the child
> Your foot which walked on the thorny path....
>
> I planned to draw the students' sense of appreciation toward their parents by reading and discussing the poem. However, as soon as I introduced this poem to the class, I immediately realized that I had made a mistake. This poem merely bored the students to death. I thought

that the poem was too artificial to draw out any genuine ideas or emotions of the students. The students needed something more authentic. An idea struck me then. "If the students need to read some writing which authentically expresses the unlimited love of the parents, why don't I let them read poems written by their own parents!!" I immediately contacted the parents and asked them to write about their experiences in raising their children. Many parents were unwilling and hesitant at first. They complained to me saying, "Why do I have to write an essay?", or "I am not a student anymore," but eventually they began to turn in essays. As a matter of fact, some of them really devoted themselves to writing, once they started. Those essays revealed severe afflictions caused by the war, and reading them bewildered me. One mother wrote about repatriation from Manchuria in the middle of severe battles. During the journey she was determined to protect the life of her child regardless of the repeated order to kill her baby because it was holding up the rest of the group members. Another mother wrote about her struggle in keeping custody of her child and raising him by herself after her husband's death (Appendix C).

I brought these stories to the class and read them aloud. Soon, the circle of compassion and empathy spread around the classroom. Students started saying things to each other such as, " Oh, I can identify with a

similar experience of my own," and "Your family has gone through lots of difficulties hasn't it?" These students were born in 1946, the year the war ended, and they had survived tough lives. There were many children who were from single parent homes, or homes in extreme poverty. The students became aware of the fact that many of the difficulties they experienced were common to many.

The new awareness of these commonalties brought their spirits together and tightly connected them. They were connected by the pain of the war and when they peered deeply into their pains they jointly reached a strong determination that they should never to allow another war to occur in this world. These students kept in close contact with each other even after graduation and published a small collection of their essays when they gathered ten years after graduation. The words of their oath appearing at the very beginning of the book shows the genuine nature of the relationships created by their empathy and what they thought in Yamamoto's class through writing and reading (Appendix D).

Empathy often emerged and developed through reading compositions and sharing problems the students faced as demonstrated in Yamamoto's story. Great literary works brought to class by the teacher also contributed often in triggering the growth of empathy among students. It seems that some stories contain essences which acutely appeal to the nature of human beings.

Experiencing such essences embodied in the literature brought the students' emotions together and internally connected them.

Fujita experienced this emerging empathy as a beginning teacher:

> I was a very inexperienced teacher when I first started to teach in Fukushima. I do not think I even knew what I was doing, but I often told students about things I had studied in the social science study groups in college. They liked to hear those stories a lot. I remember that the students were so touched by a story of a beggar written by a Russian novelist. The story is as follows: "One day a man was walking the street. A street person had approached him with a begging hand extended. The man resoundingly withdrew his hands from his own pocket to give the beggar the only thing he himself had, which was the hand shake of empathy." These kids remembered that story for years. Some of them became teachers and told the same story to their students. The story moved these students also.

Empathy Among Parents, Teachers and Students

The teachers who connected with students through empathy saw their students revealing more of their personalities which previously were only displayed outside of the school environment. Such an attitude stimulated an interest in knowing their students and understanding their world, which extended the pursuits of students beyond the classroom. As a result, they came

to realize the importance of reaching out to the parents who provided tremendous influence.

Fujita states that schools tended to perceive children, as well as their parents, as powerless. Parents are often absorbed in the educational system in which they are imposed with the role of transmitting the values of the policymakers in molding their children. As Fujita states, normal meaningful discussions between teachers and parents on the issues of children's education seldom take place. At teacher-parent conferences the content of the conversation from beginning to end is often limited to the students' grades and test scores. Similarly, letters from teachers to parents are lists of demands for controlling the students' thoughts and behaviors. To alter such an unbalanced power relationship, the life experience writing teachers attempted to pick up the voice of the parents and reflect it in actual teaching practices.

Kitano has attempted to reflect the students voices, as well as the parents' voices, into his everyday practice of education by effectively using class diaries circulated among students and parents in the class. He published class newsletters on a monthly basis, including selected essays on current major incidents in the class drawn from the circulating notes and also the responses to those issues. Kitano encouraged parents to be a part of education by inviting them to join "school talks," "Fathers and Mothers! Let's think together. Please discuss this issue with your children at home and share your opinions. The

students and I will conduct further discussion in the class." Kitano appealed to parents passionately in the newsletter.

As the parents read the newsletters and circulating notes written by other parents, they began to see the realities of the students in the class. Kitano states that the parents learned about their children's classmates and sincerely provided advice to the children who had problems in the class as if they were caring for their own children. Ties of empathy among parents also emerged as they shared their writings which expressed profound love for their children as well as the difficulties and apprehensions which accompanied raising children (Appendix E and F).

Soon, parents suggested gathering and studying their children's education with other parents in the class, to encourage and learn from each other by exchanging individual experiences. Interaction among parents prompted them to pursue the meaning and purpose of education and further to seek an education which would benefit the children greatly by gradually increasing their control over the education by the government.

There were some situations in which empathy between teacher and parent emerged based on the understanding of acute pains they had in their lives. Such empathy originated a genuine humanistic relationships between two human beings. The following poem written by Fujita based on her actual

interaction with her student's parent, demonstrates such empathetic relationships.

Keiko was not in class again

Tottering and swaying, I rode a bike to her house

In a room of broken window glass

I found nothing but a radio

In front of the radio, the father was crouching

Smell of alcohol

He started to write journals

I wrote him back

Everyday he wrote what he cooked for Keiko

His rough hands handed me a journal

I have changed since I have met you teacher, he wrote

As is obvious from this poem, Fujita did not merely perform the expected role of the teacher in dealing with the parent. Instead, she took off the mask of a teacher and stood in front of the parent as an ordinary person. Neither systematic analysis of the situation nor appropriate treatment of the situation drawn from theories which appear in a teacher's manual are present in this interaction. What is apparent instead is her intractable feeling of responding to the need of someone in anguish. Such a reaction to another's emotion is identifiable in the experience of Kitano and Yamamoto when they encountered

students who were burdened by sorrows and their determination to be with them. Based on communal sorrows, these two individuals, Fujita and the parent, were firmly connected, and embraced each other's sorrows to encourage each other and to provide power for survival. The empowering of individuals based on an empathetic relationship is at the core of Fujita's educational practice, and her interactions with parents indicates to us that education as empowerment is not limited to the classroom and one's students but also extended outside of the class.

Empathy Between Teachers and Workers

The strong unity between teachers and workers was established during the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the era when a teacher evaluation policy was proposed by the ministry of education. Fighting over the teacher evaluation policy prompted teachers' realization that being a teacher is being a wage earner, and such awareness brought a coalition between teachers and industrial workers. During the late 1950s, teachers, especially members of the teachers' union, had actively pursued unification with workers. In the process of immersing themselves into the worker's community, empathy seemed to have played an important role. It connected teachers with workers, and education with the lives of people in the society. This interaction during the course of anti-teacher evaluation policies, gave teachers opportunities to hear the voices of workers and to see society from the worker's point of view. Such experiences

helped them realize that they were teaching the children of these workers and to assert further the necessity of reflecting on the workers' voices in education. Yamamoto states:

> The teachers' union assigned me to go to a motorcycle factory and a tobacco factory in the Kawasaki area to gain support from the workers in our movement against the teacher evaluation policy. In those days the instance of a teacher entering the factory workers' circle was still very rare. So, every time I went to the factories, I was surrounded by the workers and soon, I became very close to them. I always brought compositions written by my students and their parents and read those to the workers. The workers were extremely sympathetic and moved by these essays. The essays on war experiences especially touched their hearts. They all said one after another, "Oh, this is about me," and, "Mr. Yamamoto, I understand you, I understand the importance of your fight in education. We workers will fight in here, lets hang on " I believe such emotional understanding is tremendously important in uniting people .

The empathy which emerged between Yamamoto as a teacher and the workers led Yamamoto to connect educational issues with political issues. As a result, the teaching practices of Yamamoto came to have a more specific goal and direction. He aimed at empowering children by sharing their sorrows and guiding them to think independently, expressing their thoughts through writing.

Such empowerment was necessary for children to identify the contradictions in society and to overcome them. Yamamoto states:

> I realized that we must practice the education for the children of the workers. Until then, I did not notice that most of the children I taught were from the working class. I felt the need to know more about their culture and to teach the children how to survive in that culture. There was a need for an education which would guide them to realize the contradictions in society that children must face as workers.

Empathy and Life Experience Writing Education

The experiences of the three life experience writing teachers indicate that empathy is essential in life experience writing education, establishing an ideal environment for students' personal and academic growth. Empathy triggered one to turn his/her focus from himself/herself to others which accelerated his/her desire to support others in their growth and happiness, which resulted in creating a cooperative atmosphere in the class. A strong unity was established based on empathy and created an environment where students were accepted unconditionally regardless of the differences, conflicts and disagreements which existed among them. These students who received warm encouragement and support based on empathy gained the courage to face the sorrows and pains they had held for years and overcome them. In addition, through

expressing their genuine feelings and thoughts authentically, they learned effectively to use language.

Empathy in the class is significant also in terms of developing the selves of individual students. Empathy is the process by which one explores one's own emotion. When one finds reflections of others' emotions in his/hers as a result of close examination of one's emotion, he/she realizes his/her connection with others. Often the sorrows of others actually appeals to one's emotions and guides one to discover his own embedded feelings and the emotional connection he has with others. Finding oneself is to find the other. Yamamoto clearly describes this fact by saying, "A child who is indifferent to others is indifferent to himself/herself."

Nature of Empathy

The empathy contained in the examples displayed in this section are all empathy toward sorrow and suffering, perhaps giving the impression that one must have experienced suffering to be connected to others, but this is not true. Empathy is to care about other's fate and receive their fortune as well as their misfortune, as if they were yours, and to live your life by immersing yourself into other's emotion (Adam Smith in Takada, 1984). Therefore empathy toward the joy of others is also a significant part of empathy.

However empathy toward sorrow is much stronger than empathy toward happiness, and it connects people more deeply, because the pain, whether

physical or spiritual, is much more acute than the sense of enjoyment, and the pain brings fresh vivid emotions from inside of oneself (Adam Smith in Takada, 1984). The reason that the empathy of sorrow stood out in these stories was due to the historical and social environment abundant in factors which allowed empathy toward sorrow to take place easily. Normally, empathy toward sorrow is more difficult to establish compared with empathy toward happiness, since one is normally unwilling to make the sacrifice of pulling oneself down to the painful state of others in order to understand their pains (Adam Smith in Takada, 1984). However, the teachers' sorrows, carried out from their oppressive experiences during the war, allowed them to empathize with other's sorrow naturally and immediately without again sacrificing themselves.

During the 1950s, when these stories of empathy took place, students and teachers were connected by common oppressive experiences. War had brought great sorrows and pains to their lives. The death of their friends and family, the fear of their own death, the destruction of their living environment due to severe air raid attacks, and an extreme shortage of food. Those who had survived the hardships are connected strongly and motivated to encourage each other. Such circumstances are clearly expressed in Fujita's statement:

> The students and I were very close. I was almost like one of the students. They came to my house every day. During the winter time, they came to my house before I left work and put fuel in my stove and put the pot on

top of the stove, so by the time I got home we had hot boiling water for tea. Sometimes they dropped lice from their head and I got infected by them. I was really mixing with those kids. The kids didn't have much to eat and did not have much fun at their homes, so they all came to me. Even the subtle attention I gave to the students meant a great deal to them.

Unity based on empathy was not something these teachers intended to create. They simply stood on the side of the students and embraced their pain with the hope of brining happiness of the children. Emergence of such a feeling was natural .

Focusing on Life Experiences

The awareness of the importance of focusing on students' lives came to Yamamoto's mind as he reflected on his research and the practice of the New Education. The New Education was introduced to public schools by the Ministry of Education through the advice of American occupational forces who intended to implement democracy to Japanese society. It was based on Dewey's philosophies of progressive education in which the students' direct experiences played a prominent role in students' learning in their classrooms (Oota, 1978).

Yamamoto, teaching in Niigata from 1950 to 1954, was extremely impressed with the New Education at first, and he studied it extensively. Based on his study of Dewey and Kilpatrick's work, Yamamoto developed a social

studies program for third grade students in his district. Recognition for his work by administrators was so great that he was even nominated to give a presentation of the curriculum he had developed at a teacher conference in Niigata prefecture. However, regardless of the success of his program, he was not satisfied with his teaching. Yamamoto states:

> I developed the curriculum around topics which seemed relevant and practical in the students' lives, for example, the postal system. In the class, students actually experienced how the postal system functions through simulation games in which they sorted out parcels, or sold and bought stamps. It was a good method of learning. My students enjoyed the activities, and I was praised greatly by the administrators. However, for some reason, I was dissatisfied. I knew that the way I taught was better than the traditional education in which students merely listen to lectures and memorize bits and pieces of knowledge, but I still felt something was missing. I even felt empty sometimes.

Yamamoto felt empty regardless of his devotion to the studying and the writing curriculum of American progressive education because the students were not placed at the center of the education. What children experienced in the curriculum of the New Education seemed to be too far away from the urgent concerns of genuine interest to the children. The problem was that he merely translated the examples of lessons developed by progressive educators in

America and applied them directly to teaching Japanese children. Therefore, the content of the subject did not match with the immediate and prospective needs of Japanese students.

The students Yamamoto taught were struggling for survival in the turmoil caused by defeat in the war. Their minds were occupied by serious daily life issues, such as securing food for tomorrow, and concern for family members who had not yet returned from the war. Teaching the topics in the New Education, such as the function of the postal system, was completely insignificant and irrelevant to them. What these students needed from school was not general knowledge about society, but knowledge and skills necessary for overcoming the hardships and solving the problems they faced for survival. Active involvement, raising interest, and promoting subjectivity of the students which were the significant goals of the New Education needed to be achieved as a result of solving the actual serious problems students had. Awareness of the lack of focus on children and their lives was recognized by Yamamoto through an encounter with life experience writing:

> When I was pondering the cause of my dissatisfaction in teaching, I remembered a professor who talked about life experience writing in college. So I contacted him, and he sent me a pile of children's poems in return. I was so absorbed in reading them, and began to understand that

students develop their potential by expressing the joys and sorrows they experience in daily life. I was convinced that this is the Japanese way.

Based on the reflection of the weakness of his prior practice of new education, Yamamoto began to focus on the children's lives in his teaching, which brought him to practice genuine student centered education. He rigorously interacted with the students to know their concerns in their lives in detail. Yamamoto found reading the students' compositions to be the best way to do that. "I told my students to write about what they wanted to write about the most; something they were troubled with, something they had enjoyed, and something they could not help but express to someone." Yamamoto believed that the issues need to be brought into the classroom and placed at the center of the curriculum, so he paid careful attention to the issues addressed in the students essays. In the class, a great amount of time was set aside for students to write and to discuss the significant issues stated in their writings. Writing about the issues which are closely connected to themselves, with the help of teachers, enabled students to developed skills in organizing ideas and precisely expressing them in written language. Having discussions over the issues in the essays developed students' abilities to put oneself in other's position and to make a fair judgment on the issue. Students also learned to examine the structure and function of society, as well as the values embedded in society.

The following example of Yamamoto's teaching illustrates the usage of students' writing in sharing the experience of life and developing the skills to express one's thoughts as well as to learn to see things from various perspectives. Ktatsuhiko wrote about being severely scolded by his father for refusing to go to the store to buy liquor one rainy day (Appendix G). Although he did not think that he had been at fault, writing about the incident reflectively made him think about whether the action he took was right. At the end of his essay he expressed his confusion about the issue: "I am not sure whether it was my fault or my Dad's fault." The class started the discussion on the appropriateness of Katsuhiko's action and was soon clearly divided into two groups; one supported Katsuhiko and the other supported his father. The reasons the students provided to support their statement reflect the values existing in the society which often conflicted with each other. For example, one student stated that Katsuhiko should have listened to the father because he owes his father for having raised him for twelve years. Another student proclaimed that even a father does not have the right to command others to do anything. As more opinions from various perspectives appeared, the discussion became enriched. The students faced the complicate nature of the issue and examined the values residing in the parent-child relationship in Japan which was in the middle of transition due to the influence of American democracy. However,

the most significant thing the students learned through the discussion was the importance of examining the problem of others carefully and sincerely.

Looking profoundly into one's life by means of writing is often a process of transforming oneself from the object of the world to the subject of the world. Students who were in the state of being merely baffled by some unreasonable pain or temporal joy, were capable of moving to the state where they could understand the cause of such emotion through writing. Yuko, a female student in Fujita's class, wrote about the bullying she experienced in the class (Appendix H). Yuko, who was very popular in the class during the first year of school, became the target of bullying by a group of girls throughout the following year. She wrote the details of the bullying and closely explored the nature and the cause of bullying by putting herself in the position of both the bully and the bullied.

Yuko's essay indicated her tremendous personality growth during the three years she spent in the junior high school. When Yuko became the target of bullying, she fell into a psychologically vulnerable state of allowing the bullies to totally control her. The following statement in her essay supports her lack of subjectivity at the time: "When someone told me to die, I really felt like I wanted to die." (Appendix H). "However, after carefully written about the personalities of the bullies and relationships among girls in the class, Yuko came to understand the cause of bullying. The writing gave her fair eyes through which to view her

circumstances, allowing her to gain control of the situation. Yuko's moral development is well presented in the following lines in her essay: "I know that nobody can be totally evil, even the people I hate have some good points" (Appendix H). I wish Kayoko and Akemi would also learn to understand other's pain" (Appendix H).

Searching for the deep meanings of unique experiences retrospectively through writing also enables one to grasp the essence of the experience which resides underneath it (van Manen, 1990). Yuko's experience of being bullied and her reflection upon the experience through writing revealed the fragility of human dignity when it is exposed to the language and actions of others which lacks respect and consideration. As a result of reaching into the depth of her own unique experience, Yuko became capable of understanding others' feelings of being treated disrespectfully. Thus, came to act more thoughtfully and tactfully (van Manen, 1990). Yuko stated in her essay that she wants to be someone who understands the pain of others. Such statement indicates her thoughtfulness in the prospective interaction with others (Appendix H). As we can see from Yuko's growth in writing, writing about one's own experiences precisely and deeply is the process of understanding as well as connecting oneself with others through understanding the essences residing under the unique experiences of individuals.

Focusing on one's life experience also promotes students to analyze the social and historical contexts which influenced their development of selves and guide them to know who they are. Kitano especially made a rigorous attempt to guide male students who dropped out from the mainstream school culture to realize the circumstances they were in and the contradictions with society which were directly affecting their lives. Kitano believed that quick industrialization for increasing the productivity of the nation was the fundamental cause of the students' anger. The bay area industrial plant brought great changes in the structure of occupations in the community. Many of the students' parents who in the past had earned their living by fishing, gave away their rights for fishing in return for compensation from the government. Compensation which seemed great at the time soon ran out, and the fishermen were left with nothing, except poverty-stricken lives.

The students themselves thus directly experienced the contradictions of industrialization at school. The government policy of efficiently educating citizens for economic expansion forced the categorization of students based on academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. The rigorous categorizations of the students even went to such an extreme that students who were placed in the bottom category were seen as worthless and unable to contribute to the nation. "Can you imagine how they feel when they receive a test result report saying 'You are ranked 340 out of 350 students.'?" Kitano asks.

Kitano understood the students' dissatisfaction and anger. "They acted outrageously." Kitano states:

> These students were notorious for absenteeism, extortion, robbery, and other violent behaviors, but what worried me most was that these students battered their classmates who were academically accelerated and favored by teachers. I could sense their anger at being labeled as delinquent and pushed out of the system. I also knew their incapability of expressing their anger by other nonviolent means. I wanted to do something about it .

Kitano felt that the students needed to learn the cause of their anger by deeply exploring the circumstances of their own lives. The various dissatisfactions they felt in everyday interaction with others at school and in the community needed to be understood in relation to the social structure. If they identified the fundamental cause of their dissatisfactions and related their behaviors such as drinking, violence, and absenteeism with the abstract, "oppression", their outrageous energies to distract themselves and their families could be transformed. Their degenerative energies can be transformed to positive energy and can be used to liberate themselves from the current social structures. To provide students with the opportunity to examine their lives politically, Kitano suggested the students to write biographies of their parents and grandparents, focusing on the change in lifestyle before and after

construction of the industrial plant. Kitano's attempt in the class reminds me of "currere" proposed by Pinar (1994). Pinar (1994) further states that students need to focus on concrete incidents they experience in biographic situations. This allows distancing from reality and self-reflective comprehension of reality, liberating students from the web of political cultural and economic influences hidden from conscious view, leading to further action against the oppressive elements of reality.

Focusing on students' life experiences was also used to help students to acquire content area knowledge in the classroom. The following example of Fujita's interaction with her students in eighth grade Japanese language class demonstrates her emphasis on using students' life experiences in understanding the meaning of new concepts.

> I asked Katsuaki what "eaves" means. Katsuaki, who was known as an academically accelerated student, stayed silent for a moment, trying to answer the question. Then, he asked me if he could look up the word in the dictionary. I told him, "No." Satoru who is a good friend of Katsuaki shouted "Katsuaki's house does not have eaves. He lives in an apartment complex."
>
> " OK," I said. "Well Satoru does your house have eaves?"
>
> " Yes."
>
> " What do you see under the eaves at your house?"

" Well radishes" (In this region, farmers traditionally hang radish on the eaves to prepare dry radish during the wintertime.)

"Is that the only thing you see under your eaves?" Other students yelled at Satoru.

" Hey, there is more than that, Satoru! I saw your dad's big dirty underwear lined up under the eaves at your house the other day."

Everybody laughed.

As it is shown in the example, Fujita teaches the students to use the knowledge derived from their life experiences in understanding a new concept, instead of using dictionary definitions. Fujita believes that, language is something originally developed in the actual lives of human beings, and it is constructed and developed in their daily lives through interaction among people. Therefore it is important that students turn to their own lives to identify the genuine meaning of language. Fujita believes in teaching language in relation to life experiences, promoting students' awareness of the fact that knowledge is not something given to them but something they construct through their life experiences.

Revealing Oneself

The life experience writing teachers took off the mask of the teacher and stood in front of their students as ordinary people. By showing a model of revealing oneself, they taught students the importance of expressing one's genuine voice, holding a critical view toward education, and the fact that conflict

which accompanies revealing oneself is necessary for seizing the clear picture of reality.

The teachers encouraged students to write what is true for themselves. This is because they believed writing one's experience with reflection is the way to acquaint oneself with his/her inner self and to discover their genuine voice which is often hidden under the mask one wears to play the expected role demanded by society. Kitano states, "It is important that one writes with honesty as if revealing oneself." Writing is a process of clarifying one's thought.

Language is a lens which presents a clear view of one's thought by magnifying the entangled thread of thought, through language one can disentangle the webs of thought. Therefore, using an authentic lens, language, which belongs to the writer is a necessary part of the writing process in order to see the accurate view of one's inner thought. Using false language would present a distorted view of one's inner self, hampering the process of finding one's genuine voice and communicating that voice to others through dialogue. Furthermore, the use of false language can deceive oneself and others. Speaking with language which is reflected in one's mind was something these interviewees had missed in their education during the war. All three interviewees received a military education with its repetition and reproduction of the military's values which were presented in the form of language. As a result, they were unconsciously led into the stream of militarism and governed by inhumane

values which were totally against their genuine desire. Their experience of the war taught them the close connection between language and thought; language determines thought. Their anger at this adolescent experience, made them appeal to the importance of expressing oneself genuinely in their own language when they became teachers.

For Fujita taking off the mask of the teacher and acting as an ordinary person also meant resisting controlled education and practicing education for liberation. Taking such a stance was important for Fujita because she intended to transform the teacher's role from that of missionary who conveys the national policies to the citizen, to that of encourager who promotes the students' liberation from the social system which is oppressing them. The base of such an educational stance was developed during her college years. Through active participation in student activism on campus aimed at protecting the rights and freedoms of students, she had identified the ironical situation in which many teachers were placed. Fujita states:

> The students who attended teacher training school were usually from poor families, because Teachers College was one of the few schools which provided full scholarships to their students. It is good that those students were given opportunities to receive an education. However, the kind of education they received was not really something we should call "education" (It was rather indoctrination). Those students were put into

dorms and brainwashed day and night. By the time they graduated from college, their minds were filled with policies of the government and they were ready to transmit them to students.

As described in Fujita's statement, the students who attended teacher training school were typically talented and ambitious students from the working class. They left homes with a hope that they would return to the community and empower children from similar circumstances, enabling them to succeed. However, after four years of intensive training at school, they internalized the values of the authority, returning to the community as copies of the oppressor.

Aware of this pattern, Fujita was determined that she would stand on the side of the people in the community instead of standing on the other side, oppressing them. Fujita's goal in education was to promote individual autonomy by encouraging students to think critically, expressing their voices. To practice such education she chose to be directly connected with people as one of the members of the community.

Although often times the genuine expression of oneself caused conflict in schools, Fujita's beliefs in a teacher's role was manifested in her action of consistently choosing to do what she needed to do as an individual rather than assuming the expected role of model teachers. She was very open about expressing her honest opinion toward education. For example, during the 1980s when control over students had increased tremendously through the

establishment of more stringent regulations over students' behavior, Fujita responded to the new overbearing system as follows:

> I did not hide my opposition toward the school which increased its number of regulations to control students. Many trivial rules were set by teachers. Every time we had a teachers' meeting, we set up new rules further restricting students' behavior. We teachers were required to announce and enforce the rules for the students. I did make announcements in class, but I usually didn't enforce anything. I told my students what I felt about the rules very frankly. One time, the teachers decided that students must properly wear the shoes designated by the school. I told my students, "I am sorry that this rule was made official at the teacher's meeting yesterday. I must apologize to you for not having opposed the establishment of the rule as much as I could have. Because the atmosphere of the meeting was so bad, I could not persist in my disagreement. I am sorry. I do not think that it is necessary to wear shoes properly during the summer when it is so hot and humid. You can wear sandals or stay barefoot just as your teachers do. I will take care of it."

Fujita demonstrated a critical attitude toward authority which spawned the same attitude among students. Kitano and Yamamoto also aimed to help students be aware of the fact that authority does not always provide the best answer. Such a critical view of authority which began to be developed by the

students extended beyond the school itself to the teachers. The teachers also became targets of the students' criticisms. Actually the three teachers I interviewed welcomed such criticism from students. They interpreted it as a sign that the students are beginning to attentively see reality through their own eyes and from their own reflective thinking, gaining the courage to express their own thought without hesitation. Kitano states:

> When students pointed out my weak points and mistakes, I always complement them saying, "I am glad that you mentioned this to me. You are very brave to do this." Many teachers tend to scold students when the students criticize teachers, " Why did you write such a thing? How can you dare to write such things?" Responding to students writing in such a manner is absolutely wrong. We must encourage them to write what they truly think. If the teacher gets offended or annoyed by the open comment of the students, the students will never write anything after that.

The following example of Yamamoto's response to criticism of students also demonstrates his genuine encouragement for the students to be honest in their writing:

> At the beginning of the semester (April), I always tell my students that school is the place where you have fun. I try my best to be kind to my students in class. I try not to raise my voice nor scold them severely. But, to be honest with you, I have a very short temper and I cannot hide this

nature too long. After a few month, usually when I see students moving so lazily during PE class, I forget that I am not supposed to yell or scold at my students. One day a boy wrote a short poem in his journal, "Summer Drawing Near, Mr. Yamamoto Is Getting Scary. "

I thought, "Wow, this is great ! He watches me so attentively, and also this poem is very short but to the point." So, I printed this poem and handed the copies of it to the students in the class. They all got excited and started to say "Yeah, this is true. Ryo I am glad you said that." Everybody sympathized with his poem.

The teachers demonstrated the students that nothing is absolutely correct, so even authority needs to be tested. These teachers' positive reaction to the students' criticism not only affirms the correctness of the attitude of being critical of authority, but also teaches students the fact that being direct with each other is indispensable for a genuine coalition among individuals. A genuine coalition is made possible only through the sharing of honest ideas and the feelings one holds toward each other and the issue. Although sharing ideas reveals differences among individuals and causes conflict, it is the only way to bring about understanding and trust.

For strong coalitions, one must know the inside of oneself and others. Only, by disclosing one's intention completely, one can encourage mutual understanding and deepen trust with another. Fujita learned the importance of

revealing oneself and talking to others with honesty for coalition during the anti-teacher evaluation movement. As the movement expanded in the public schools in 1957, a growing number of teachers were involved in the activity initiated by the teachers' union to protect the freedoms and rights of teachers. However, as the issue became more serious, a dubious atmosphere prevailed over the school. Fujita states:

> When the teachers' union urged our school to decide whether or not we would participate in a strike as a school, we had a meeting to discuss what we should do about this issue, but no one was really talking and the discussion went nowhere. One of our colleagues said that she was not willing to discuss the issue openly. She was wary of others. She said, "If I were the first person to express support for the strike, someone here might tip me off to the police as a ring leader of the strike. I may sound like I do not trust my colleagues, but I cannot help but being suspicious about others." In response to this statement, another colleague suggested that we should disclose our real feelings toward others to establish trust in our relationships. We have decided to spell out everything on our mind; problems one sees in other teachers' way of teaching, criticisms and suspicions we have toward others, instead of talking about those behind their backs. After we talked, the suspicions were washed out. We promised each other that we would not blame

others for whatever decisions individuals make on the issue of the teacher evaluation policy. Then, frank discussion on the issue of whether or not to participate in the strike was possible.

Recognition of others and a strong coalition was possible because of the fact that we were strongly connected by trust and respect for one another regardless of superficial differences. Even though one's opinion may not match that of others, we need to know that we still respect and cooperate with each other, working toward positive changes in the school.

Potential conflict with others seems to be a major factor which prevents one from expressing oneself openly in the group. "The students are afraid that they will be ostracized from the group if they do not go along with the other members of the group," Kitano states. In today's school settings, students tend to watch each other and imitate others to avoid conflict and maintain harmony in the group. Kitano calls this kind of coalition "fake." Yamamoto also states that, "A group characterized by a genuine coalition is composed of individuals who are true to themselves." Therefore, we do not have to kill ourselves to belong to a group.

Fujita expresses the necessity of facing the conflict accompanied with revealing oneself, saying, "Students develop themselves through conflicting with each other." Through conflict, one can broaden one's own perspectives in understanding the issue, developing a clearer picture of the issue. Conflict with

others means that one is being exposed to different perspectives. To have one's understanding of the issue criticized by someone means that one is given the opportunity to distance oneself from his understanding of the issue as well as to see it from various sides, which reveals a new reality of the issue, previously unknown to oneself.

As a result of obtaining a new perspective, one may make adjustments in understanding the issue, or one may think that the other's understanding of the reality is distorted and attempt to adjust it. Such an attempt requires one to clearly reveal and systematically explain one's thought, allowing one to have a more precise and clear understanding of one's inside as well as affirming the confidence of the stance one takes toward an issue.

The conflict involved in interaction reminds me of Piaget's concept of disequibilium in which one's cognitive organization and the new reality does not fit (Miller, 1992). Adaptation of cognitive organization and reality is triggered by an encounter with a new reality which does not fit in the current cognitive organization. This is the essential factor in an individual's cognitive development. Revealing one's perspectives which conflicts with those of others is the indispensable contributor toward the development of each individual student and the group as a whole. Kitano allowed such development through conflicting within the class. How Kitano and his students dealt about the bullying that took

place in their class in the early 1980s illustrates how these students grew through conflict with each other:

> Reiko was picked on by boys all the time. It seemed that even the girls were avoiding her. She was eating lunch by herself all the time and the students wrote complaints about her endlessly in their group journals, which I thought was unfair. I patiently waited for Reiko to respond to the numerous complaints against her. I began to be concerned about her silence, but one day Reiko wrote a very short sentence in the journal: "I sense that the scar on my arm causes people to feel uncomfortable around me." I was really shocked that I was unaware of her scar until that moment. I felt my incompetence as a teacher for allowing such discrimination in the class. I was also infuriated but in the group journals I simply wrote: "Have you all thought about Reiko's feeling? Do you understand why she decide to write such a thing ?" Contrary to my hope and intention, the boys still kept criticizing her. As usual, the journals continued to be filled with complaints toward Reiko (Appendix I).
>
> However, as they continued to write on this issue, they discovered that Reiko has behaved in a way which elicits complaints from others; she ignored suggestions from others, she acted selfishly, and she never expressed her opinions. Reiko admitted the problems and promised to

change, but the bullies didn't stop. Then, some girls realized that the boys' attitudes toward Reiko was also a factor which needed to be looked at. One girl criticized the boys' attitude toward Reiko in the journal " The boys' attitude toward Reiko is also bad. It is true that Reiko has some problems but shouldn't we talk about the attitude of the boys instead of merely talking about Reiko?" (Appendix I)

The interaction of the students on the issue of Reiko continued in the journal but the bullying itself did not cease completely. It was something which required a great deal of effort and time to be solved. But the essay Reiko wrote at the end of the semester made me feel that these students progressed in understanding the importance of having non discriminating eyes in interacting with others: "When the second semester was over I was upset, because I had to be in another group. I was not sure which group I was going to be in. Nakamura asked me to join his group. I cried and didn't say a word. I was so happy to know that there were some boys who did not hate me. I was so happy then."

In this interaction with the students, I see Kitano's belief manifested in letting the students conflict with one another to learn from each other. Normally teachers dealing with a bullying case immediately blame the bullies and stop it by the use of authority. However, Kitano listened to the students and never made any judgment on what they said. Instead he created an atmosphere in which

students could express themselves freely, stimulated the students' thinking by asking questions and allowed the students to propose various opinions.

Revealing one's thoughts and feelings to oneself and to others in class was the base of life experience writing. Kitano states, "The base of life experience writing is to enable students to write something genuine. By sharing writings in which students express what they really mean, they recognize each other's unique abilities, personalities, and experiences and develop respect for others and a sense of community. How can you establish relationships if you do not know what others are thinking?"

Drawing Out From Students

> As soon as I (Kitano) received my teaching certificate I got a teaching job at a junior high school in downtown Tokyo. I met Akiyoshi there. He was a student in one of the seventh grade Japanese classes I taught. The fact that he stuttered severely caught my attention right away. I thought that he was always quiet because of his stuttering problem. He seldom said anything in class. It almost seemed as though he never wanted to participate in class activities. However, when I read his composition submitted to me as a required assignment during the summer, my impression of him drastically changed. It was an eye opening experience in my teaching career. The title of his composition was "A Rose." The title itself amazed me because I could not relate such

a flashy topic with the quiet personality of Akiyoshi.

Akiyoshi's story began with his discovery of a rose on the side of a street. The rose seemed to have been abandoned by someone. He picked up the rose and took it home with him where he then placed it in a glass filled with water. Soon, the rose regained its energy and demonstrated its splendid beauty to Akiyoshi. I was so shocked and moved by the sensitivity and caring attitude of Akiyoshi demonstrated toward the tiny dying creature. This was an aspect of Akiyoshi I had never known and which was now revealed to me. I was so excited, I told him to write more compositions for me. Akiyoshi asked me in his stuttered speech, "Can I just write about anything, Mr. Kitano?"

During the following year, Akiyoshi frequently brought his writing to me, and I wrote lots of comments on his writing giving him further encouragement. He came to write about social issues such as war and military defense, gradually broadening his perspective on social reality. By the time he graduated from junior high school, he had acquired a high level of skills in critical thinking.

Akiyoshi's essay made Kitano aware of the kindness, care, and sensitivity hidden within Akiyoshi as well as other students, and writing can be used to draw out such potential within students. Like Kitano, Fujita and Yamamoto also see students as people who hold enormous abilities and talents which may or may

not have been previously demonstrated. When they encounter those potentials in students, they are momentarily struck with a feeling of delight and cannot help but share their joy with their students, further motivating students to reveal and cultivate their talents.

To be able to sense and draw out the hidden potential of students, teachers need to be extremely sensitive to their students' internal status which is subtly manifested in their actions and attitudes. The teachers can sensitively catch the subtle whispers of students which could otherwise be missed if one does not have an attentive ear. Once the teachers are able to hear the whispers of students, they wait for the pupils to express themselves fully by creating an embracing atmosphere. Sometimes, students are late in cognitive development, and are not fully able to express their feelings although their affective maturity enables them to sense and comprehend the richness and splendidness of the universe. To help students express their internal feelings in the form of language, teachers stand by the students and carefully search for the barriers which block their expressions. During this process, teachers do not accommodate the pace of their progress to the one which is determined by the established school systems. They do not try to squeèze out the potential of the students forcefully, but instead wait for students to naturally want to express themselves. However, a teacher must be careful not to wait too long for the students to respond. It is also important that teachers provide the right amount of help to students at the right

moment. Limiting the amount of help they provide is essential in allowing students to learn to express themselves with their own subjective energy at their own pace. The following example, the interaction of Yamamoto with his second grade student Yuji whose cognitive development was late compared to his other classmates, illustrates Yamamoto's talent in bringing out the potential of his students.

> Yuji was not able to write hiragana, the Japanese phonetic alphabet, perfectly, even though he was in the second grade. One day in our language art class, we talked about the big rainbow we saw the day before, and we decided to write poems about it. Yuji was just sitting with a blank expression while everyone else had already started to write their poems, so I told him to write the title *Niji*, a rainbow, yet Yuji remained unresponsive to my instruction and continued to stare blankly in the air. So I told him "*Ni* is the same as the *ni* in his last name Yamata*ni*, and *ji* is the same as your first name Yu*ji*." He wrote down the word *Niji* at the top of the paper. Then again returned to his blank expression. So I asked him what he wanted to write after *Niji*. He told me, "I want to write, 'There was a rainbow.' " He had difficulty writing some of the characters so I told him to look at the Japanese characters chart on the back of his textbook and to pick up the character he needed to use from the chart. I left him to walk around the classroom and check on the other students' progress.

When I returned to Yuji, I noticed that he had not written anything since I left. So I asked him again," Yuji, what do you want to write on the third line?" He immediately replied ," I want to write' I looked at the rainbow sluggishly.'" "Oh, ok. Sounds good," I said, and I took off again to go around the class. Well, when I came back to him he was sitting still again. So I asked him

"OK, Are you finished?"

" No, I have more." said Yuji

"Oh, I see. What do you want to write then?"

" I looked at the rainbow forever ."

"OK, You are done now.'"

" No, not yet. I want to write 'I looked at the rainbow until it was gone.'"

I wrote the last two sentences on the board so that Yuji could see and check with his. When I wrote " I looked at the rainbow forever, " I looked at the rainbow until it was gone," I suddenly realized, " Wow, this is not bad, actually it is not bad at all. The words were carefully chosen and put together clearly, and Yuji's impression of the rainbow was purely expressed in a simple manner. So I wrote the entire poem on the blackboard and read the poem aloud with the class. One student said "Wow, Yuji is a poet." I was so happy that the students were able to understand and praise the talent of another student. I asked the students,

what they liked about Yuji's poetry. One student said," I like the part 'I looked at the rainbow forever.' Another students said "I liked that he used 'looked' repeatedly." I finally said "Yes, Yuji, is a great poet," and the class gave a round of applause to Yuji.

The example of interaction between Yuji and Yamamoto demonstrates the fact that Yamamoto allows Yuji to move on at his own pace and provided a minimum of help but the very help he needed to succeeded in drawing out his talent. Yamamoto also allows enough freedom and time for Yuji to explore his emotions and thoughts. It seems that Yamamoto is aware that that the route individual students take and their pace of progress varies. Whenever teachers "teach," they tend to have an idealized image in their mind and try to elicit the answers which overlap these images. However, by focusing on eliciting the correct answer, teachers often end up prohibiting the freedom of children to think independently. Yamamoto's interaction with his student teaches us the teachers should observe students carefully and accompany them along their path toward making sense of the phenomena, instead of imposing ideas which would help children reach the correct answers. It is important that the teachers use a minimum of external force in promoting students' learning. The external force the teachers use should maximize the power of students to progress within themselves. When students realize such power exists within them, they gain

confidence and let the power drive them toward progressing in acquiring knowledge autonomously.

The belief of not forcing students to express themselves is also seen in Kitano and Fujita's teaching practices. Similarly to other life experience writing teachers, Fujita strongly believes in the importance of expressing oneself honestly in one's writing and sharing it with the class, yet not forcing students to reveal themselves to the class. Forcing their students to do something against their own will is totally against the life experience writing teachers' beliefs. Therefore, they instead wait until their students are anxious to talk by making an effort to create an open atmosphere in the class. Teachers stand on the same level as the students. Fujita states, "To elicit the genuine voice of the students, I just relax and show them who I am. I do not act like a teacher in the class. I do not make my students talk to me politely nor call me Mrs. Fujita. They call me "Grandma Shuku (her given name)."

Besides creating a relaxed atmosphere, Fujita makes sure that the students know that they will be heard, accepted and valued. "If a teacher can establish such a trusting relationship with the student, he/she does not have to worry about eliciting the student's voice. "Fujita's attempt to teach content area knowledge by relating it to students' real life experiences seems to be effective in making students believe that their unique life experiences are a valuable asset in her classroom, and thus motivate them to express their experiences aloud. In

class, Fujita intentionally throws out topics to the students which are closely relevant to their lives. "Every student has life experiences. They all have knowledge derived from their unique life experiences, which they can share in class to help others learn," Fujita states.

Many students are not confident about their academic abilities due to the negative labels given to them throughout their years of education. They tend to believe that there is always a correct answer and that they do not have that correct answer. Therefore, they automatically withdraw from the classroom, not believing what they know is valued in schools or that it has anything to do with the learning which takes place in school. "When students see me getting excited in hearing other students talking about daily life events, they start to feel 'Hey I can do that , too' and they all start talking," Fujita states. The following is an example of how Fujita draws out lived experiences from her students:

> One time I gave a teaching demonstration at another school. The objective of the class was to examine the usage of the word "eyes" in the Japanese language and to understand the concept of it. I asked students if they knew any phrases or expressions which contain the word "eyes". Several students raised their hands and responded one after another. One girl sitting in the front row hesitantly said, "Threading the eye of a needle." The teachers who were observing the class were shocked by that, because the student is known for being passive and quiet, and had

never said anything in the class before. The student was fond of and very good at needlework. That's why she immediately thought about "threading the eye of a needle." The sight of other students interacting casually in the class helped her realize for the first time that her knowledge of needlework could be useful and valuable in other subjects.

As demonstrated in this example, once students find that their unique experiences, abilities, and knowledge are valued in the class they will speak out.

Yamamoto also proclaims with confidence the importance of valuing students' voice: "When students sense intuitively that anything they say in this class will be heard, they will naturally reveal themselves." Yamamoto assists students to build confidence in their voices by sharing their voices with the class and providing recognition. Yamamoto states:

> Every morning I let students tell stories. One day, while we were listening to a student talk, I saw Yusuke fidgeting. So I asked Yusuke, "Do you want to say something, too?" He just nodded his head and whispered to me, "I saw a dead lizard. So I put grass over his body." I repeated to the class in a loud voice," "Attention everyone. Yusuke saw a dead lizard yesterday, and he put grass over his body." Later I printed Yusuke's very short story and handed it to the class and to their parents. I wanted everyone to know the kindness Yusuke had demonstrated toward the small creature. The following day, we read Yusuke's story and talked

about creatures. When students know that whatever they express is heard and accepted by their friends, they will naturally express themselves, even a student who is developmentally late (Yusuke was a developmentally late student. He had brain damage due to a traffic accident when he was three). Letting the students naturally feel that they cannot help but express themselves is the point of language instruction.

To read what is not written on the paper and responding subtly to the unexpressed voices of the students which are hidden behind the elaborate words in their essay is another ability teachers must have in order to elicit students' voices. Reading journals written by the students on a regular basis was the main activity life experience writing teachers conducting subtly eliciting student voice. The three teachers I interviewed communicated with students by having them regularly write two types of journals. One was the journal exchanged only between student and teacher, while the other one was called a group journal, which circulated among small groups which normally consisted of six to seven students. Students were told by teachers that they could write anything they wanted to in the journal; something about their family, what they did during the weekend, their concerns, complaints about their lives, and problems they saw in the class. The teachers read the journals carefully trying to catch the subtle sign of students' awareness of problems or willingness to express their ideas and emotions.

The following example of interaction between Yamamoto and his student Ryo, demonstrates how Yamamoto draws out the voice of his students:

Yamamoto had a student, who transferred from another town in his first grade class. The second day he came to Yamamoto's class he wrote a short memo in his journal: "Mr. Yamamoto, I am very sad right now. My mind cannot deal with the life I have now." Yamamoto listened to the voice of the child by carefully examining the inner state of the child expressed in the writing, and responded in writing with sympathy. " Why can your mind not deal with your life? Are you sad because you have parted from your friends? What do you mean your mind cannot deal with your life? Please explain this to me." Yamamoto states that allowing a child to express his/her feelings of sorrow happiness, and sufferings in their own words is important in understanding the inner feeling of the child and promoting recovery.

Yamamoto states that teachers must be sensitive to the inner side of the students as they read student writing. They must try to understand how students felt while they were writing or what made them write what they did. "When we sense the inner side of the students expressed in their writing, we write words of empathy in response and return them to the students." Such a non-threatening message is successful in encouraging students to reveal themselves. In other words, the teacher attentively senses the students' voices which have not yet completely surfaced, and stimulates the students with empathetic comments or

questions. When a student knows that his/her voice is going to be heard and accepted, the student feels encouraged and finally voices genuine feelings. This subtle process is called "drawing out."

Summary

Life experience writing teachers assisted their students in looking into their life experiences closely through writing. Students wrote not only facts of their experiences but their subjective emotions attached to those experiences. Writing about their experiences retrospectively was the process of revealing their internal state clearly as well as becoming aware of social structures and the contradictions contained in such structures. The identification of the contradictions and an affirmation of their feelings toward such contradictions provided confidence in their perspectives of society and further empowered them to liberate themselves from the system which oppressed them.

The three interviewees had the common goal in their class. Throughout the stories, this goal is supported by four themes of pedagogy: empathy, revealing oneself, focusing on life and drawing out.

These four themes have been consistently manifested in these three teachers' educational practices from the 1950s to the 1990s. Japan has experienced drastic economic changes during these forty years. In the 1950s when the interviewees began teaching, Japan was destitute due to damages from the war. However abrupt economic expansion and industrialization from the

1960s to the 1970s took place and by 1980 Japan had became one of the super economic powers in the world (Ogawa, 1982). As the economic contexts changed, the problems students faced in their lives changed. The type of students the teachers met in the 1950s were those who suffered from the wounds of war. The teachers who had the same pains and sorrows as their students in extreme poverty, shared such feelings with them and attempted to provide students with the power for survival.

In the 1960s and 1970s, teachers witnessed students who were baffled by the drastic changes in lifestyles caused by industrialization. Through interactions with students, parents and workers in the community, the teachers listened to the voices of victims in industrialization and aimed to practice education which reflected their voices. The teachers also encouraged students to look into their lives, and to identify the structure and mechanism of the social structures which oppressed them, hoping that the students would live strongly in society by protecting their own rights and freedoms as human beings.

As industrialization was further promoted, education was also forced to adapt to the economic system. Students were involved in the system of effective education for the profit of industry. Such education merely sorted students into the hierarchical structure of the work force depending on their test scores. Strengthened control in education in the 1980s caused stress and inhumane relationships among students as they are demonstrated by the increasing

numbers of bullying cases. Students are urged to compete with others constantly throughout their education. Many among those who are in the middle of the competition have lost the capacity to care about others' fortunes and to trust their friends. On the other hand, those students who dropped out of the competition are suffering from low self-esteems. Anger toward such discrimination is demonstrated in their violent behaviors. The teachers listened to the voices of these students and empathetically embraced their pains of being discriminated against by the system. They also helped students to gain confidence by letting them discover the special and unique talents they have.

The four themes of pedagogy consistently supported the teaching of life experience writing teachers during these forty years regardless of the drastic changes in the society and education. These are the essential themes of good teaching from which the teachers of today and of the future can learn to benefit their students.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the interviews with three life experience writing teachers, the relationship between their personal beliefs and their educational beliefs, how their educational beliefs conflicted with those of controlled education, and how they managed to practice life experience writing are discovered. The examination of the educational experiences of these teachers provided implications for educational reforms in the 1990s, and how life experience writing education can contribute to solving current educational problems.

This chapter consists of five sections: the Connection Between Experience of War and Educational Beliefs, Characteristics of Life Experience Writing Education Under Controlled Education, Necessity of Life Experience Writing Education Today, Recommendations for Japanese Education Today, and Recommendations for Future Research.

The Connection Between Experience of War and Educational Beliefs

Every child has a voice within themselves; the voice of bewilderment, wonder, delight, sorrow confusion and suffering from hardships in their lives. In

Japanese schools, children have been forbidden to express their voices naturally. Controlled education, which gradually expanded its power since the late 1950s, urged children to express prescribed doctrines. As a result, they suppressed their genuine voices. However, the stories of Kitano, Fujita and Yamamoto have proved that there are some teachers whose careers were dedicated to eliciting hidden voices from their students. There are some teachers who see teaching as compassionately listening to the students' internal voices and guiding them to discover the voices of themselves and their surroundings.

The educational beliefs of these teachers are rooted in their anger toward their oppressive experiences during the war. They were once refined products of military education who willingly sacrificed their lives and souls for the victory of the nation. They had voices which were never allowed to surface during their adolescence. Their suppressed voiced were filled with sorrows; sorrows for the death of their young friends and brothers in the war, sorrows for people who were treated inhumanely, sorrows for unknowingly having killed friends. Such sorrows were transformed into anger as they were freed from militarism after Japan's defeat in the war. They directed their anger toward the education they received which prohibited them from thinking independently, feeling naturally and expressing themselves freely. When the teachers identified their unvoiced sorrows and anger from their adolescence with the voices of their students, they

could not help but instinctively respond to such voices empathetically. They were compelled to empower their students so that the students would gain courage and abilities to express their voices and survive independently by overcoming difficulties in their lives. In their interaction with students, a strong underlying determination of not allowing the indoctrination of children was always manifested.

The minds of children today are occupied by assuming the given roles of model students. They are incapable of caring for others, reflecting on their lives, or thinking autonomously. To the eyes of life experience writing teachers, the two education systems; education during the war, and controlled education started in the late 1950s seem identical. They both teach children that the hierarchy among citizens is indistructive and being loyal to one's superior in the hierarchy is necessary. Throughout their education, students are trained not to question or criticize authorities. In addition, being tolerant of difficulties they encounter as a consequence of following the orders of superiors is taught. Both educations intended to sort young citizens into categories based on nation's need and provide knowledge and skills which contribute to the interest of the nation.

The teachers acute awareness of the regression of post world war II education to that of fascism motivated them to practice life experience writing

education without being totally overwhelmed by the power of controlled education.

Characteristics of Life Experience Writing Education Under Controlled Education

Life Experience Writing Versus Controlled Education : Conflicting Points

The educational beliefs of the life experience writing teachers are, in several aspects, contradictory to those of controlled education. First, the way life experience writing teachers view knowledge and how their students relate themselves to knowledge is fundamentally different from the view of controlled education. In classrooms, the life experience writing teachers encourage students to share knowledge derived from individual life experiences. Therefore, in the life experience writing classroom, all students are encouraged to be significant sources of knowledge. Life experience writing teachers also view knowledge as something constructed by an individual student through careful examination of one's life experiences in writing and having dialogues with others on the issues contained in the writings. The knowledge a student obtains with great emotional involvement in the process of writing and discussion becomes a part of the student, the knower, and leads his/her actions. This is very different from the way practitioners of controlled education view knowledge. In controlled education, knowledge is limited to that which appears in officially approved

textbooks designed to teach specific academic subjects to students. Students are simply the receivers of prescribed knowledge, so their chance of sharing their knowledge in the class is scarce.

The relationship between teachers and students in a life experience writing classroom is also different from that in controlled education. Life experience writing teachers encourage students to express their feelings and thoughts honestly in the class, although such a practice could cause conflicts with teachers and other students. On the other hand, controlled education forbid students to make statements which contradict the views of authorities. Such differences are related to how the teachers view their roles in the classroom.

Teachers in life experience writing education are comrades of their students. They stand on the side of the students quietly and encourage their students by patiently listening to their subtle voices, embracing joys and sorrows. On the other hand, teachers in controlled education view themselves as messengers or indoctorinators who merely transmit the values of authorities from the top down to the students.

The relationship among students in the life experience writing classroom is different from the typical students' relationships in controlled education, where students are each others' competitors who rush hastily toward the same goal. In the life experience class, students are instead friends who assist others in

learning by sharing knowledge, perspectives, and abilities which are derived from their own unique experiences.

These differences are derived from the basic differences in their educational goals. The purpose of controlled education is to transmit knowledge and skills to the students to increase the productivity of the state, while in a life experience writing class the goal is to know and respect oneself as well as others, the basic attitude constituting a democratic society. These enormous gaps between life experience writing education and controlled education have caused the teachers to face various obstacles to their teaching practices.

From Criticism to Creation

Under controlled education, the primary focus of life experience writing teachers was on the creation and development of their ideal education rather than criticisms of the established educational system. The three interviewees were actively involved in the activities of the teachers' union which revealed to the public the potential dangers of the government's control over education during the late 1950s and the early 1960s, when legislation such as teacher evaluation policies, revision of national instructional guidelines, and implementation of national standardized testing were proposed.

As the union's attempt at overthrowing these proposals failed, the teachers chose to withdrawal from activities and returned to classrooms. Their fight over the protection of education against government control continued in

the classrooms. Struggles in classrooms did not take the form of directly attacking administrators or conservative teachers as had been the case in the past. Their fight, under the strict control of the government, was rather quiet and subtle, but a persistent one.

In the mainstream education whose focus was on the transmission and reinforcement of knowledge, the teachers devoted themselves to developing students' abilities to think and express themselves through writing and sharing their life experiences. Their attempt was to nurture students' abilities to survive without losing themselves, regardless of the effects of increasing control over their lives both in and out of school.

Not only were these teachers energetic in interacting with their students in class, they had also made great efforts in promulgating their students' voices beyond class. They issued monthly newsletters and anthologies which were composed of students' compositions to parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Their efforts at demonstrating their students' cognitive and moral development manifested in their writings were successful in gaining the public's great approval and support for the practice of life experience writing education.

The lesson we learn from these teachers' experiences is that creation is more substantial than criticism for the transformation of education. Criticism toward controlled education is necessary in the process of reconfirming the

grievances and obstructing government's enforcement of such a system. However, criticism itself does not transform education. The major focus of teachers who seek transformation of controlled education should be directed at developing and providing examples of alternative education and demonstrating their effectiveness to the public.

Obstacles and Difficulties in the Class

The establishment of regulations such as teacher evaluation policies, revision of instructional guidelines, textbook inspections, and national standardized testing in the late 1950s to the early 1960s forced life experience writing teachers to face various restrictions in their teaching practices. For example, the revision of instructional guidelines in 1958 legally forced individual classroom teachers to follow the national standardized curriculum, which had a significant effect on the practice of life experience writing teachers (Yamazumi, 1993). As the interviewees state, since 1958, teachers have been required regularly to submit to school principals lesson plans based on instructional guidelines for approval. Materials which were allowed to be used in the class were limited to the official textbooks, and maintaining a certain pace in covering the curriculum was made compulsory. Therefore, the life experience writing teachers had to compromise in securing hours for writing education. For example, Kitano covered the required curriculum in forty minutes and spent the remaining fifteen minutes of class on writing. The three interviewees circulated

group journals among students or exchanged journals themselves with individual students, so that the students could write and read outside of the class. Most of the discussion was done voluntarily during homeroom hours or after school.

Another restriction they had to face was the entrance examinations. Although these teachers did not agree with the idea of ranking their students based on test scores, they had to assist students in preparing for such tests. The utilization of test scores were unavoidable in career counseling. Their decision to adapt themselves to the examination system was inevitable if they were to help their students to survive in a structure in which prospective benefits and opportunities were determined by the results of the entrance examination.

However, at the same time, the teachers were aware that so called "academic achievement" measured by standardized tests does not represent the genuine intelligence of a person. Therefore, they made an effort in guiding their students to realize their valuable talents, abilities and skills which may not be reflected by test scores and grades.

Teaching students who had developed impoverished minds under controlled education was a great challenge. Many students were in a stage of frustration and confusion, and they were often not responsive to the teachers' help; they stayed passive, indifferent, and cold. We must admit the fact that many delinquent students left school without completing a single writing project,

regardless of the teacher's endeavor and great compassion to help them. In addition, bullies among students were rampant in their classrooms. It appeared that the students were trapped by the severe race for social selection and did not have the ability to understand the insignificance of such a race or have the capability to care about others. However, the teachers never gave up their hope, believing that education is a lifetime work. The benefit of their education may not have been obvious while their students were in class, but the skills and attitudes developed in life experience writing must have been carried on and developed further throughout their lives.

Necessity of Life Experience Writing Education Today

The golden age of life experience writing education was the early 1950s when Japan was recovering from the wounds of the war (Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987). As it is demonstrated in students' compositions, students in the early 1950s faced serious survival issues in their everyday lives. Such an environment triggered students' inspiration to write and to share their feelings and thoughts with others empathetically. Some might say that today, in a society of abundant materials and services, there is no need for life experience writing education. As the interviewees stated, it is true that students today say that they have nothing to express, nothing to write about. However, this does not mean that these students are in a state of total satisfaction and there are no significant

issues or concerns in the students' lives which need to be examined. The fact that students do not have anything to express needs to be seen as a symptom of controlled education. The reason they say "I have nothing to write about" is because they are "silenced." Controlled education contains two, major problems regarding the sound development of individuals in a democratic society. One is impoverished human relationships and the other is an absences of dialogue among individuals in the community. I believe life experience writing education can contribute to solving these problems.

Recovering Impoverished Human Relationships

One of the major problems Japan has in education today is cold human relationships among youngsters. Severe academic competition among students over entrance examinations is causing tremendous stress on the students. Many of them who have been labeled and categorized from an early age have lost their self confidence. Being a rival of other students in the class created an uncooperative atmosphere in the class, depriving students of a sense of trust and the capacity to care. As Fujita states, students with low self-esteem and loneliness due to being placed at the bottom of the hierarchy in school seek friends and cluster together to fulfill insecurities. However, they incidentally create a new hierarchy among themselves because obtaining security through suppressing others is the only remedy they are familiar with. There is no genuine

unification among students who cluster together to persecute others because their insecurities do not allow them to reveal themselves to others.

Life experience writing can be useful in today's education in rehabilitating these impoverished human relationships among students. As it was demonstrated in the practice of life experience writing teachers, students can identify genuine ties among themselves by writing their subjective experiences honestly and sharing them with the class. In addition, discussions in the class would reveal the unique experiences, abilities and personalities of individual students, leading students to respect others for having such unique qualities . It would further help students to understand that each individual can contribute to the group in a unique way, providing confidence to each individual and turning the competitive relationships among students into cooperative ones.

Promoting Dialogues Among Individuals

Another problem of the current education is a lack of dialogue among individuals. This needs to be altered for two reasons. One reason is that the lack of dialogue is a threat to the formation of a democratic public. Feinberg (1993) criticizes conservatives for believing that the maintenance of public harmony is necessary and it should be achieved by transmitting prescribed symbols of the society through education. Feinberg (1993) further proclaims, "A genuine democratic society is in the process of constituting itself" (p.181), in which individuals are engaged in critical dialogue with others on their meaning of

certain common knowledge. Harmony is created as a result of this constant and full engagement of individuals with various cultural experiences on exploring the meaning of the world (Feinberg, 1993).

Controlled education in Japan provides students with a set of common information, but does not allow individual students to interpret the meaning of them. Therefore the students are missing chances to explore and create new meanings. If Japan seriously seeks to be democratic, students must learn through education to be open to different cultural experiences and engage in critical dialogue with others who are different from themselves.

The teaching methods of life experience writing education provide implications for teachers who aim to practice democratic education. Life experience writing education in which individual students reflect on their experiences through writing and exchange their own insights and interpretation of significant issues by reading and discussing others' writings, is truly democratic. Studying how life experience writing teachers have elicited dialogue in class is helpful for teachers today who strive to practice democratic education in Japan. The traditional Japanese value of maintaining harmony by ignoring differences and avoiding conflicts often inhibits them from having critical dialogues with others, exchanging various interpretations of reality and constantly negotiating their meaning. Techniques which have been developed and used by life experience writing teachers to have open dialogue with others

based on their profound understanding of Japanese tradition and culture can be applied in today's classes. Techniques such as coalition based on empathy, revealing oneself, and the attitude to wait patiently for students to identify their voices with subtle encouragement, indicate to us how we can bring about dialogue among students who are still ambushed by the traditional values of avoiding conflicts.

Another reason that lack of dialogue in public is not appropriate today is that such an attitude disables us from adapting to the postmodern age in which massive new information and values from various cultures are constantly flowing in. Cultural interaction is rapidly increasing and the basic principle of social life is called upon for the continuous accommodation to new and unanticipated situations. The current education in which students are merely receiving fully prescribed knowledge results in focusing them to accept the meaning of the old, which hampers us from adapting and acting appropriately in a rapidly changing world (Feinberg, 1993). In Japanese society, strongly persistent traditions and new information flowing from other cultures coexist chaotically. Therefore, the Japanese must face these conflicting ideas and values constantly in our lives. For example, the Japanese public has recently emphasized the importance of internationalization, and they are rigorous in learning foreign languages and visiting overseas. However, legal protection of foreign residents in Japan is insufficient and various obstacles are placed before foreign residents in Japan,

representing the long standing Japanese tradition of excluding outsiders. These issues need to be brought up to the individuals' conscience and to be negotiated extensively by community members for social change.

Life experience writing class prepares students to adapt to the needs of a rapidly changing society. Sharing expressive writing on self selected topics in the class exposes other students in the class to various current issues derived from life experiences. In addition, discussions in class lead students to carefully seek out the meaning of such issues.

Recommendations for Japanese Education Today

The study of educational practices of three life experience writing teachers revealed two major immediate tasks Japanese must carry out to rehabilitate its education as well as to adapt to the current needs of society. One of the tasks is the reexamination of the responsibility of World War II, and the other is reform of the entrance examination system.

Reexamination of the History of Modern Japan

Japan has never sufficiently reflected on their national responsibility of World War II, and therefore Japan is not capable of fully understanding or actively participating in the formation of a democratic public. Lack of comprehensible understanding of Japan's position in World War II is also a hindrance to the formation of a national identity.

Japanese citizens have avoided admitting the inhumane and destructive conduct of the Japanese military to citizens of other nations during the war. In education, for example, providing students with a precise description of the Japanese military invasion of other Asian nations is halted by excluding detailed descriptions of such historical facts from textbooks calling it overemphasis on criticism of military action (Araki, 1986). Historical facts concerning the war are presented to students after the facts have been carefully selected and fully interpreted by the Ministry of education to develop strong unity among Japanese citizens by using the pre-war strategy of promoting ethnocentrism and deification of the emperor. Students who are merely forced to memorize prescribed knowledge about the war are prevented from examining the war from various perspectives through dialogues. Such education has created a mass of citizens who are indifferent to participating in dialogue on the issue of World War II and the subsequent military power development of the nation today.

Today, the Japanese must reexamine our experiences of World War II, in which basic human rights were deprived, because the actual experience of fascism can take us to a genuine understanding of the meaning of fascism and the importance of democracy. Especially, raising the awareness of the responsibility of Japanese citizens who failed to intercept the emergence and the expansion of fascism to Asian regions is required for Japanese citizens to develop a strong determination not to repeat the same mistake.

As the interviewees of this study indicated, the post war history of education in Japan reveals that the focus of education has shifted from promotion of democracy to control of citizens who can contribute to the process of efficiently increasing the productivity of the state. The direction that our education has taken since the establishment of Hatoyama's regime in 1954 is regressing to the pre war period, discarding the needs of individual children and intervening with the sound development of democratic citizens (Araki, 1986).

However, the public, lacking sufficient reflection of war and complete understanding of democracy, is incapable of resisting such educational crisis. Today, when controlled education is harshly impeding the sound development of democratic citizens, it is necessary for the public to reexamine the history of World War II. It is especially important for us to find out how education was used by the military government to involve citizens in formation of fascism. As the life experience writing teachers' firm beliefs on practicing democratic education were developed through reflecting on their personal war experiences, so must the reexamination of the war by individual Japanese citizens be the initial step in articulating the undemocratic characteristics of controlled education and realizing the necessity of working toward the reform of education.

Reflection on the war is also necessary for forming the Japanese national identity. The Japanese government has emphasized the importance of unity among Japanese citizens and the formation of a strong national identity through

controlled education. I believe that goal itself has no falseness, but aiming to achieve this goals by imposing legends which promote loyalty to the emperor as a symbol of Japan to the students is unjust (Araki, 1986). Such a strategy is inappropriate not only because it is identical to that of the fascist government during the war but also because a genuine identity will not be formed in this manner. A national identity is not something which can be created and given by a leader of the nation, because by nature it is something formed and reformed constantly as the public negotiates the meaning of significant cultural and historical facts which are relevant to our current lives (Feinberg, 1993). How Japan was involved in World War II and how it affected its current politics and economy are essential knowledge, without which the Japanese are unable to presume further dialogue on significant national and international issues.

For sound formation of a national identity, inclusion of the view of nations which had been placed under Japanese colonization during the war is crucial. The accurate and comprehensive examination of history will not only assist the formation of a national identity, but the legitimate recognition of it by other nations. This should enable the Japanese to take part in genuine dialogue with other nations on current significant international issues and to develop cooperative relationships.

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As life experience writing teachers have discovered in class, a genuine coalition and unity among members of the group is formed through engaging in

open dialogue with others who have different views. If Japan truly seeks to have a strong national identity, they need to guide their citizens to know the realities of such significant historical events and examine their meaning, instead of obscuring the mistakes Japan made in the past for fear of distracting from the unity and loyalty of the nation.

Reform of the Examination System

Reforming the entrance examination system is the key for solving problems in Japanese education today. As it is demonstrated in the view of life experience writing teachers, every child has his own unique talents, abilities, personalities, and life experiences which affect what and how the child learns. The current evaluation of students' academic achievements measure students' capability of internalizing given knowledge within a limited time. Such tests measure only one aspect of their academic achievement, failing to evaluate each student's uniqueness. As a result of neglecting the uniqueness of individuals in the evaluation process, student's uniqueness in the entire education process is killed.

Suppressing one's uniqueness is a hindrance to the development of democracy, because it discourages students from engaging in "discourse about differences" (Feinberg, 1993) which is essential in the formation of a democratic public. Neglecting uniqueness of students is also negative because it accelerates competition with other students and discourages them from cooperating with

others. Besides neglecting the uniqueness of the students, the existing examination system has another factor which is harmful to the democratic process. The enforced memorization of certain fully interpreted knowledge does not allow students to explore the deeper meanings and realities of such prescribed knowledge.

The Ministry of Education has recently indicated its interest in reforming the entrance examination system in response to public criticism of, overemphasis on academic achievement in determining the student's future social status. However, we need to carefully examine the purpose and consequences of this reform. The base of this reform is on their new definition of intelligence, which consists of a student's subjectivity, ability to make *independent* judgment, and creativity (Fukuzawa, 1993). The idea of taking various qualities of students into consideration in understanding intelligence sounds more appropriate than their previous emphasis on evaluating students' intelligence solely by academic standardized tests. However, this new definition of intelligence and the accompanying evaluation process has the potential of causing greater stress on students than ever, because in this new evaluation process, students are not only judged by their ability to internalize prescribed knowledge, but also by their personalities and behaviors in school.

Evaluating students' personal qualities and ranking them as a result of this evaluation is wrong for the following reasons. First of all, it is impossible to

measure an individual student's unique personal characteristics appropriately by a standardized measurement. Second, ranking students based on their personalities contains the danger of creating unnecessary order among various personalities and urges students to adapt to a certain personality model, instead of developing their own unique characteristics.

The genuine reform of education today needs to be geared toward abandoning standardized evaluation and increasing flexibility in the admission to higher educational institutions. I believe expanding the uniqueness among universities in terms of the admission process and curriculum is essential for the success of the reform. Each individual university should focus on strengthening the development of certain programs based on its own academic interests and educational beliefs, and admit students who can contribute to its programs. Therefore, each university should develop its own unique standard for admissions. This admission process is beneficial for three reasons. It would open the door of higher education institutions to diverse types of students who seriously seek to receive a quality education. Second, the unique programs would result in producing prospective workers with various unique skills and knowledge which will facilitate the process of adapting to the needs of a quickly changing and diverse market. Third, the reform of admission to higher educational institutions would automatically change the education of secondary and primary schools. I believe abolition of standardized tests in college

admission would lead to the reduction of the standardization of education and competition among students throughout the system.

Recommendations for Future Research

Studying the experiences of life experience writing teachers has revealed various significant essences of education which could inspire further research to deepen our understanding of life experience writing education and writing education in general. Empathy was one of the most significant themes in the practice of life experience writing teachers. Further study of empathy including how empathy can assist development of the self and coalitions in class and how empathy can be nurtured in writing should be conducted.

Another possible study is an extensive case study specifically focused on the process of finding one's voice through writing. Concrete examples of instructions and advice life experience writing teachers gave to students during the writing process and how it affected their writing is beneficial, helping us to understand how writing and the process of coming to find one's voice are related to each other and how teachers can better help their students in finding their voices in the class.

Studying how life experience writing education is perceived by the students and how it actually influenced them throughout their lives, both in

school and outside of school, would also be beneficial in deepening our understanding of the nature and the power of life experience writing. Such a study could reveal new themes of teaching which were not recognized in the study of life experience writing education from teachers' perspectives.

Finally, I believe it is important to explain the cognitive and moral development of students in life experience writing classes by using established developmental theories and curriculum theories. Such a study would enable educators who are not familiar with life experience writing education to understand the potential contribution of this education to the development of students.

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APPENDIX A
A Letter Requesting Participation for an Interview

Kaoru Miyazawa
321,1-5-20, Takadanobaba
Shinjuku Tokyo, Japan
(03)3204-7351
May, 20th, 1996

Dear _____

My name is Kaoru Miyazawa, I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University in the U.S. and I am currently staying in Tokyo to conduct research on life experience writing education during the post-war period in Japan. I spoke to Dr. Shima yesterday and I am pleased to hear that you are interested in participating in my research as a respondent.

I have been interested in life experience writing education because it is an education which places children at the center of the curriculum and views research and interviews, please do not hesitate to let me know.

I will call you soon to set an appointment with you for the first interview.
I am looking forward to seeing you soon. Thank you for your child as a constructor of the knowledge instead of a receiver of knowledge. This type of education is very much in contrast to the type of education I have received in Japan.

I have studied about life experience writing education since last winter and currently I am writing my Master's thesis on life experience writing education in post World War II Japan. The purpose of my study is to reconstruct the experiences of life experience writing teachers' educational practices in Japanese classrooms under controlled education in the form of narratives and identify the meanings of such experiences.

I am enclosing a brief description of the purpose of my study and the method of interview in this letter. If you have some questions regarding my cooperation
Sincerely yours,

kaoru Miyazawa

APPENDIX B
Yoshiko's Composition

My Dead Father

I do not know what my father looks like. When I became a third grader my grandma told me " The morning you were born, your father received a red letter from the emperor, so he had to go to the war. That morning, your mother was in a bed, getting ready to deliver you, so she could not see your father off. You were born after he had left the house. I do not know much about the war, but I heard that my father died in the south, at a place called Reyte, when I was four years old. He was hit by a bomb. I remember the moment we heard the news that my father died.

I do not know the situation well, but after my father's death, for some reason my mother left home. I have not seen her since then. It has been five years since she left the house but I have not seen her even a single time. I stay with my grandmother and grandfather but I feel alone. The other day grandma said, "Today is your father's memorial day," and told me to pray in front of his picture. When I was looking at his picture I felt he was gazing at me. Whenever I look at his picture I cannot help but wish that my father were alive. I hate the war which killed my father.

APPENDIX C
Essay Written by a Parent of Yamamoto's Student

My husband died during the war. The family of my dead husband told me that I need to leave their home, but that the child should stay since he belongs to their family. However, I have heard the rumor that my deceased husband's family is planning to have some stranger adopt the baby. "How can I hand my baby to a stranger?," I thought. But If I keep custody, the baby will have no family to belong to and he will be illegitimate. I thought having parents, although they are adoptive parents, would be better than being an illegitimate child. There were so many nights I cried in torment about the future of my child. Every time I nursed my baby, my desire grew stronger to keep him. I could not resist this maternal instinct and eventually left my husband's home with my baby and returned to my family. The family of my husband persistently insisted that I must return the baby to them, but I was determined that I would never let this child go, even if I had to sacrifice my life. My mother helped me in taking care of the baby. I started to work to support them.

Masayuki, (the child's name) your mother hopes that you will grow up to be good . Your mother cannot spend much time with you, and I know you feel lonely. But, your teacher cares about you and takes good care of you. He is like your parent now. Please listen to your teacher well and study hard.

APPENDIX D
Words of Oath Written by a Class of Yamamoto

In the empty field where everything was burned by air raid attacks, we were born. Without sufficient food, we were raised. We were born with a strong will for survival. We know that our parents had put out the greatest effort in raising us. Those children have become mature. Some of us have already gotten married and have children. We will never let our children experience war.
We will never allow any war to take place in this world.

APPENDIX E
Essay Written by a Parent of Kitano's student

I had met all of you at the initiation ceremony, but I must apologize to you that I did not know about the circulating note until today. Yesterday night, my daughter Keiko suddenly asked me to write something on this note. I had opened the note and looked inside. It seemed like this note had been circulated several times. I inquired of my daughter if she had ever brought this note home before. She said yes and told me that she had missed chances to show this note to me and my wife because we are both so busy. My wife leaves home before the kids get home and does not come back until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. I work the night shift also.

The other day, my daughter came back from school and suddenly begged me to let her transfer to some other school with tears in her eyes. So I asked her what had happened at school. She said that boys in the class had been bullying her, calling her dirty. Everybody came to avoid her and even though she tried to get to know other girls, they just ran away from her. As we talked more I found out that not only people in her class but also of her grade in other classes had picked on her. She said that she had no friends at school. I told her that she needs to be more outgoing and try to make friends instead of waiting for some one to approach her to become friends. I had told her that there is a saying,

"Rumors last only 75 days." I told her "You should ignore what other people say to you and tolerate it for a while. If you completely ignore them they will not see any reaction from you, so they will naturally stop picking on you." I admit that my daughter does not take care of her appearances well. However, since she is a teenage girl now, she will be better soon.

This child was born two months earlier than the scheduled date. She was underdeveloped and we had to carefully raise her, even during the summer we heated her bed with hot water. I wonder if premature birth is causing retardation in her cognitive development. Every time I tell her to study, she just leaves the room. Recently she had shown a sign of being a little more motivated than before, but since she is already very behind the other students, it seems as though she does not know where to start.

I had difficulty in keeping up with school work when I was in school. I entered junior high school right after the war. We did not have school buildings, so we had to go to school in the afternoon after elementary school children finished their work. Unlike nowadays, it wasn't necessary to have a high school diploma to get a job. Three classes out of five did not go to high school. I did not go to high school either. Maybe my child has taken after my character, but society has changed. I want her to study more. Please take care of her well.

APPENDIX F
Essay Written by a Parent of Kitano's student

I have read this note several times and written essays a few times. Every time I see this note I feel that what I write in the note is all about my son and my family. I feel that everyone seems to have similar problems at home. The problems mentioned by many of the parents are the problems of my home. The problems are accumulating greatly at my house and I do not know how to deal with them. I think it is a good idea to get together to talk about solutions for these problems and exchange our ideas about dealing with the problem.

Our children are studying hard. We parents should not just tell our children to study hard but we should also study hard ourselves for our children so that we can help them and better guide them. Would you like to think about the issue together?

APPENDIX G
Katsuhiko's Composition

About Being Scolded

One day when it started to rain outside, Dad told me " Hey, Katsuhiko. Go to the liquor store and get a bottle of Sake (rice wine)." I told him that I did not want to go because it was raining. Dad got angry and yelled at me, "You bastard. If you cannot listen to what I say in this house, you do not belong here. Get out of this house." I cried and ran outside in bare feet. When I was running down the slope, Mom caught me and said, "You had better apologize to Dad," but I said, "I told him that I don't want to go to the store, because I don't want to. I am never going to tell him 'I am sorry.'" As soon as I said that I started to run again.

When I passed in front of the grocery store, my aunt saw me and said, " Hey what's wrong with you Katshiko?" I felt like I wanted to cry more because she was so kind. I told her everything that happened. My aunt told me to come to her house. She held my hand and took me to her house. Then, she cooked me supper at home. I was trembling because I was wet and soaked completely from being in the rain for a long time. My aunt said, "I will take you home later" but I fell sleep.

Next morning Mom came to get me. I remembered about last night and cried. I felt angry. Mom, my aunt and I went back home together. My aunt scolded my father when we got home. She said, "How can you hate your child so

much." Dad apologized to my aunt. She further said, " Katsuhiko is going to take after the business. You better treat him well. If you scold him too severely, I am going to kill you." When I think about this incident, I am not sure whether it was my fault or my Dad's fault.

APPENDIX H
Yuko's Essay

Incident in a Home Economics Class

I was surprised to see Mariko was in Akiko's group. I thought Mariko was in Kawabe's group. I assumed Mariko was kicked out of Kawabe's group since no one in the group really liked her. Wondering about such things, I was looking at Mariko. As usual, Akiko's group members were being noisy and everybody in the class was disgusted. When I looked back again at Mariko, I saw Kayoko write down something on a piece of paper and secretly put it on the back of Mariko with scotch tape. Then they laughed at Mariko behind her back.

I said to Honda very bluntly, " Hey, look! They are acting silly again." I could not hide my anger when I said it. Honda looked at Mariko and said, " That is too much." The paper stuck to Mariko's back said, " Stupid bastard, Die!" Mariko seemed to not have realized what was on her back and was chatting with other girls. I do not like Kayoko and her friends so I just stared at them with contempt, and thought what they were doing was too much.

Last year, I had been bullied by girls in Akemi's group. They picked on me and cursed me all the time. I forgave them as time passed by, but last year I hated them and even wished that they were dead. They often said things to me like "stupid" and "die." The word "die" was too painful to me. This term is totally

different from calling someone "Stupid" or "Idiot." When someone told me to die, I really felt like I wanted to die.

As I pondered those things, the class was over. Mariko wondered about the laughing and looked around herself. One girl from another class told her that something was on her back. She finally realized what was on her back and her expression changed to one of a mixture of anger and sadness. She ran off from the class. When I returned to class, I saw Mariko and Kayoko arguing. Mariko seemed truly infuriated. Her face was red. Kayoko told Mariko

" How do you know that I did it?" Michiko who was standing on the side of Mariko laughed. Because Mariko's accusation was so persistent, Michiko told Mariko to stop. Mariko became silent and then Michiko started to laugh really hard.

I saw all those interactions, but I did not sympathize with Mariko very much. Mariko should have already known that those girls were bad and would do such things to her. They wanted to irritate Mariko, and they succeeded. She has done exactly what they wanted her to do. (She has been totally manipulated.) Mariko should not have hung around with those girls from the beginning, I thought. Mariko was never treated with respect by the girls. They used her all the time. One time when we needed pens in PE class, I saw Mariko carrying about 10 pen cases by herself. I sympathized with her then, but at the same time, I thought that Mariko seems happy still, so I decided to just leave her alone.

A month passed. One day I realized that my wallet was gone from my pocket. Yuki, Sakiko Hikari, and some other girls helped me to find the wallet. Mariko had joined to help. We weren't able to find it. I started to wonder if someone had taken it or if I had left it somewhere. I shouldn't have suspected that someone had stolen my wallet .... Although I told myself I should not suspect anyone yet, I unconsciously started to suspect Akiko and Michiko. Mariko suddenly said, "I think Akiko and Michiko did it." I was quite shocked to hear such a statement from her. I could not believe that she did not trust someone in her group.

On the way to home I wondered about various things. I started to question if I had been right in the way I related with others. I hated some people totally. When I saw people who give trouble to others and hurt others, I got sick. I even felt that I did not want to breathe the same air as they did. The reason I started to feel this way toward others is because I was bullied by some girls in the class. I was depressed for a long time last year, but some of the girls in the class supported me and encouraged me. and I have decided not to let the bad girls bother me.

From that day on, I came to separate people into two groups; my friends and my enemies. I trust my friends totally and I really appreciate such friendship. I have some good friends with whom I can really talk. I know that nobody can be totally evil; even the people I hate have some good points. However, I do not

want to tell them the fact that I acknowledge their good points. Why do I need to be nice to someone who made me cry and suffer so much? I know such an attitude is wrong, but I am a human being and I am very weak.

I just think Mariko, who cannot determine who are her real friends and who are not, seems to be wrong. I am aware that there are many people like Mariko in this world. I want to be strong and wise I don't want to be like Mariko who just follows everyone and is used by others.

When I first entered this school I was one of the loudest and most popular girls. I often made fun of a quiet girl who did not confront with me. I picked on Sachiko just for fun. However, after I became a target of bullying during the following year and was cursed by other girls I realized how language which lacks respect and concern can hurt one's mind. I regretted what I had done to Sachiko. I decided that I would become a person who understood the pain of others. I made an effort not to do unpleasant things to others. I became a better person. I spent painful days during last year by being bullied, but that experience made me strong and wise. Now I understand the pain of others. I wish Kayoko and Akemi would also learn to understand other's pain.

APPENDIX I
Group Journals from Kitano's Class

Reiko did not do any work during the cleaning hour. She just peered out the window. When I told her to do her work, she snapped at me and left. I gave up on her and cleaned the room all by myself. Before the cleaning time was over, Reiko had already changed her uniform. I was very angry at her.
Okuda

Today Reiko and Haruki argued again. I just looked at them and thought "Oh, they are doing it." They fight every time they see each other. Listening to them argue is so annoying. This morning, they were fighting again although the vocabulary quiz was about to start in a few minutes. I do not think they cared about the quiz.

When the quiz was over, Haruki, a guy in our group, was asked to collect the answer sheets. Haruki said to Reiko, " I am not taking this Jerk's answer sheet. " I felt sorry for Reiko and told her that I would take her answer sheet to the teacher for her, but Reiko bluntly said " No thank you."
Eiko

Today I want to write about two things. One is about Reiko and the other is about home economics class. This essay might get very long but please be patient and read it through.

I agree with Ootsuki, Suga, and Goto on the weak points of Reiko, but I need to add some thing. First, When Suga wrote on the note that everyone is hesitant in pointing out the weakness and inappropriate behaviors to Reiko, Mr. Kitano said that everyone should not be so hesitant in directly pointing out faults to Reiko, because we are friends. What Mr. Kitano said could be true, but I do not want to tell Reiko anything because she ignores me whenever I tell her something. Reiko never responds to me verbally. Besides I do not like the fact that she always start crying. Someone might think that I picked on her. This is the reason why I am hesitant in saying anything to her.
Hiroki

I and other members of my group feel the same way. Everyone except for Kariya hates Reiko. Yesterday, I told Kuga that Mr. Kitano had suggested that we discuss how we all feel about Reiko and why, but Kuga merely said he does not like Reiko too. Why don't we talk about this issue during the homeroom time tomorrow?
Fumio

Why does everyone hate Reiko? What do you really mean that you do not like her? Do you not like her attitude, language, appearance or expression? There should be some reasons for that. You need to clarify the reason that you feel negative about Reiko. Clarification of those would disclose problems which we need to solve. It is important that we make efforts in understanding a person, Reiko.
Kitano

Reiko does not say anything during the group meeting although she has an opinion. I think people will listen to her and understand her more If she says something.
Ayako

Atomi told me suddenly that we were going to have a group meeting after school, so I wondered if something bad had happened. I suspected Atomi and Reiko had some trouble. All the boys were complaining. " Reiko does not like to be warned by others. She never listens to us." Reiko was looking away from the boys and never responded to them. Because everything I heard was a complaint about Reiko, I asked her, " What do you think about it?", but she did not say anything. The way the boys talked to Reiko was rude, so she may not have wanted to talk to them. However, I think it is selfish of Reiko to just ignore the boys when they were talking to her.

Soon the boys got angry. One boy stood up and slapped her. I believe violence is absolutely wrong. Reiko started to cry. Atomi said " Reiko has to move to a different group or we must dissolve this group and form a new group again." All the boys agreed with him. I suggested that we should be more patient in rehabilitating this group, but the boys said it was absolutely impossible.
So I am going to suggest reorganizing the group at tomorrow's class meeting.
Hayashi

In the past there were incidences when I felt sorry for Reiko. When I was in the 6th grade, I saw boys block her way whenever she tried to walk in the classroom. I told the boys to quit but they told me to shut up. Now Reiko seems a little bit happier. The group Reiko was in before was a very bad one. I do not know why it was bad but I think both Reiko and her other group members were bad. They should have tried to understand each other more. When Reiko talks to boys, the boys act like they are annoyed. I think this hurts Reiko's feeling. Boys need to be more considerate and kind to Reiko.
Karita

We had a group meeting today. Again, we talked about Reiko. Yesterday we had a group meeting on the same issue, but it did not go well, so we had to quit the discussion in the middle of the meeting.

Shimizu said "Although Reiko had promised that she would behave well in the classroom, Reiko did not take any notes during the class." Reiko quietly said that the board was shiny and she could not see anything on the board. Shimizu again said " what are we going to do if you do not change, you need to tell us how you would like to change. " Reiko looked down and did not say a word. As she did not say anything we got irritated and yelled at her, "just say something." Later I learned that she mumbled "I will do my best," but I was not able to catch her words. That was my fault. The boys' attitude toward Reiko is also bad. It is true that Reiko has some problems but shouldn't we talk about the attitude of the boys instead of merely talking about Reiko?
Okuda

APPENDIX J
Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board
Human Subjects Review

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 05-07-96 IRB#: ED-96-125

Proposal Title: NARRATIVES OF LIFE EXPERIENCE WRITING TEACHERS DURING THE 60S IN JAPAN

Principal Investigator(s): Wen-Song Hwu, Kaoru Miyazawa

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Please change the address of the contact at Research Services on the informed consent form to the following address:

Jennifer Moore, IRB, 305 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK, 74078

Thank you.

Signature: John K. Wyckoff

Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: May 15, 1996

VITA

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Master of Science

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